This is a digital copy of a book that was preserved for generations on library shelves before it was carefully scanned by Google as part of a project to make the world's books discoverable online.

It has survived long enough for the copyright to expire and the book to enter the public domain. A public domain book is one that was never subject to copyright or whose legal copyright term has expired. Whether a book is in the public domain may vary country to country. Public domain books are our gateways to the past, representing a wealth of history, culture and knowledge that's often difficult to discover.

Marks, notations and other marginalia present in the original volume will appear in this file - a reminder of this book's long journey from the publisher to a library and finally to you.

Usage guidelines

Google is proud to partner with libraries to digitize public domain materials and make them widely accessible. Public domain books belong to the public and we are merely their custodians. Nevertheless, this work is expensive, so in order to keep providing this resource, we have taken steps to prevent abuse by commercial parties, including placing technical restrictions on automated querying.

We also ask that you:

+ *Make non-commercial use of the files* We designed Google Book Search for use by individuals, and we request that you use these files for personal, non-commercial purposes.

+ *Refrain from automated querying* Do not send automated queries of any sort to Google's system: If you are conducting research on machine translation, optical character recognition or other areas where access to a large amount of text is helpful, please contact us. We encourage the use of public domain materials for these purposes and may be able to help.

+ *Maintain attribution* The Google "watermark" you see on each file is essential for informing people about this project and helping them find additional materials through Google Book Search. Please do not remove it.

+ *Keep it legal* Whatever your use, remember that you are responsible for ensuring that what you are doing is legal. Do not assume that just because we believe a book is in the public domain for users in the United States, that the work is also in the public domain for users in other countries. Whether a book is still in copyright varies from country to country, and we can't offer guidance on whether any specific use of any specific book is allowed. Please do not assume that a book's appearance in Google Book Search means it can be used in any manner anywhere in the world. Copyright infringement liability can be quite severe.

About Google Book Search

Google's mission is to organize the world's information and to make it universally accessible and useful. Google Book Search helps readers discover the world's books while helping authors and publishers reach new audiences. You can search through the full text of this book on the web at `http://books.google.com/`

20472
8

Harvard College Library

FROM

Rev. Henry Wilder Foote

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

CRITICAL,

HISTORICAL AND MISCELLANEOUS

ESSAYS.

By LORD MACAULAY.

WITH A MEMOIR AND INDEX.

IN SIX VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

NEW YORK:
SHELDON AND COMPANY.
BOSTON: GOULD AND LINCOLN.
M DCCC LXII.

Digitized by Google

20472.8

Rev. Henry Wilder Foote

RIVERSIDE, CAMBRIDGE:
STEREOTYPED AND PRINTED BY
H. O. HOUGHTON.

Digitized by Google

CONTENTS

OF

THE THIRD VOLUME.

	PAGE
BURLEIGH AND HIS TIMES. (*Edinburgh Review*, April 1832.)	1
MIRABEAU. (*Edinburgh Review*, July 1832.)	37
WAR OF THE SUCCESSION IN SPAIN. (*Edinburgh Review*, January 1833.)	75
HORACE WALPOLE. (*Edinburgh Review*, October 1833.)	143
WILLIAM PITT, EARL OF CHATHAM. (*Edinburgh Review*, January 1834.)	194
SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH. (*Edinburgh Review*, July 1835.)	251
LORD BACON. (*Edinburgh Review*, July 1837.)	336

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

ESSAYS.

BURLEIGH AND HIS TIMES.[1]

(*Edinburgh Review*, April, 1832.)

THE work of Dr. Nares has filled us with astonishment similar to that which Captain Lemuel Gulliver felt when he first landed in Brobdingnag, and saw corn as high as the oaks in the New Forest, thimbles as large as buckets, and wrens of the bulk of turkeys. The whole book, and every component part of it, is on a gigantic scale. The title is as long as an ordinary preface: the prefatory matter would furnish out an ordinary book; and the book contains as much reading as an ordinary library. We cannot sum up the merits of the stupendous mass of paper which lies before us better than by saying that it consists of about two thousand closely printed quarto pages, that it occupies fifteen hundred inches cubic measure, and

[1] *Memoirs of the Life and Administration of the Right Honourable William Cecil Lord Burghley, Secretary of State in the Reign of King Edward the Sixth, and Lord High Treasurer of England in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth. Containing an Historical View of the Times in which he lived, and of the many eminent and illustrious Persons with whom he was connected; with Extracts from his Private and Official Correspondence and other Papers, now first published from the Originals.* By the Reverend EDWARD NARES, D. D., Regius Professor of Modern History in the University of Oxford. 3 vols. 4to. London: 1828. 1832.

Digitized by Google

that it weighs sixty pounds avoirdupois. Such a book might, before the deluge, have been considered as light reading by Hilpa and Shalum. But unhappily the life of man is now threescore years and ten; and we cannot but think it somewhat unfair in Dr. Nares to demand from us so large a portion of so short an existence.

Compared with the labour of reading through these volumes, all other labour, the labour of thieves on the treadmill, of children in factories, of negroes in sugar plantations, is an agreeable recreation. There was, it is said, a criminal in Italy, who was suffered to make his choice between Guicciardini and the galleys. He chose the history. But the war of Pisa was too much for him. He changed his mind, and went to the oar. Guicciardini, though certainly not the most amusing of writers, is a Herodotus or a Froissart, when compared with Dr. Nares. It is not merely in bulk, but in specific gravity also, that these memoirs exceed all other human compositions. On every subject which the Professor discusses, he produces three times as many pages as another man; and one of his pages is as tedious as another man's three. His book is swelled to its vast dimensions by endless repetitions, by episodes which have nothing to do with the main action, by quotations from books which are in every circulating library, and by reflections which, when they happen to be just, are so obvious that they must necessarily occur to the mind of every reader. He employs more words in expounding and defending a truism than any other writer would employ in supporting a paradox. Of the rules of historical perspective, he has not the faintest notion. There is neither foreground nor background in his delineation. The wars of Charles

Digitized by Google

the Fifth in Germany are detailed at almost as much length as in Robertson's life of that prince. The troubles of Scotland are related as fully as in M'Crie's Life of John Knox. It would be most unjust to deny that Dr. Nares is a man of great industry and research; but he is so utterly incompetent to arrange the materials which he has collected that he might as well have left them in their original repositories.

Neither the facts which Dr. Nares has discovered, nor the arguments which he urges, will, we apprehend, materially alter the opinion generally entertained by judicious readers of history concerning his hero. Lord Burleigh can hardly be called a great man. He was not one of those whose genius and energy change the fate of empires. He was by nature and habit one of those who follow, not one of those who lead. Nothing that is recorded, either of his words or of his actions, indicates intellectual or moral elevation. But his talents, though not brilliant, were of an eminently useful kind; and his principles, though not inflexible, were not more relaxed than those of his associates and competitors. He had a cool temper, a sound judgment, great powers of application, and a constant eye to the main chance. In his youth, he was, it seems, fond of practical jokes. Yet even out of these he contrived to extract some pecuniary profit. When he was studying the law at Gray's Inn, he lost all his furniture and books at the gaming table to one of his friends. He accordingly bored a hole in the wall which separated his chambers from those of his associate, and at midnight bellowed through this passage threats of damnation and calls to repentance in the ears of the victorious gambler, who lay sweating with fear all night, and refunded his winnings on his knees next day. "Many

Digitized by Google

other the like merry jests," says his old biographer, "I have heard him tell, too long to be here noted." To the last, Burleigh was somewhat jocose; and some of his sportive sayings have been recorded by Bacon. They show much more shrewdness than generosity, and are, indeed, neatly expressed reasons for exacting money rigorously, and for keeping it carefully. It must, however, be acknowledged that he was rigorous and careful for the public advantage as well as for his own. To extol his moral character as Dr. Nares has extolled it is absurd. It would be equally absurd to represent him as a corrupt, rapacious, and bad-hearted man. He paid great attention to the interests of the state, and great attention also to the interest of his own family. He never deserted his friends till it was very inconvenient to stand by them, was an excellent Protestant when it was not very advantageous to be a Papist, recommended a tolerant policy to his mistress as strongly as he could recommend it without hazarding her favour, never put to the rack any person from whom it did not seem probable that useful information might be derived, and was so moderate in his desires that he left only three hundred distinct landed estates, though he might, as his honest servant assures us, have left much more, "if he would have taken money out of the Exchequer for his own use, as many Treasurers have done."

Burleigh, like the old Marquess of Winchester, who preceded him in the custody of the White Staff, was of the willow, and not of the oak. He first rose into notice by defending the supremacy of Henry the Eighth. He was subsequently favoured and promoted by the Duke of Somerset. He not only contrived to escape unhurt when his patron fell, but became an im-

Digitized by Google

portant member of the administration of Northumberland. Dr. Nares assures us over and over again that there could have been nothing base in Cecil's conduct on this occasion; for, says he, Cecil continued to stand well with Cranmer. This, we confess, hardly satisfies us. We are much of the mind of Falstaff's tailor. We must have better assurance for Sir John than Bardolph's. We like not the security.

Through the whole course of that miserable intrigue which was carried on round the dying bed of Edward the Sixth, Cecil so demeaned himself as to avoid, first, the displeasure of Northumberland, and afterwards the displeasure of Mary. He was prudently unwilling to put his hand to the instrument which changed the course of the succession. But the furious Dudley was master of the palace. Cecil, therefore, according to his own account, excused himself from signing as a party, but consented to sign as a witness. It is not easy to describe his dexterous conduct at this most perplexing crisis, in language more appropriate than that which is employed by old Fuller, "His hand wrote it as secretary of state," says that quaint writer; "but his heart consented not thereto. Yea, he openly opposed it; though at last yielding to the greatness of Northumberland, in an age when it was present drowning not to swim with the stream. But as the philosopher tells us, that, though the planets be whirled about daily from east to west, by the motion of the *primum mobile*, yet have they also a contrary proper motion of their own from west to east, which they slowly, though surely, move at their leisure; so Cecil had secret counter-endeavours against the strain of the court herein, and privately advanced his rightful intentions against the foresaid duke's ambition."

Digitized by Google

This was undoubtedly the most perilous conjuncture of Cecil's life. Wherever there was a safe course, he was safe. But here every course was full of danger. His situation rendered it impossible for him to be neutral. If he acted on either side, if he refused to act at all, he ran a fearful risk. He saw all the difficulties of his position. He sent his money and plate out of London, made over his estates to his son, and carried arms about his person. His best arms, however, were his sagacity and his self-command. The plot in which he had been an unwilling accomplice ended, as it was natural that so odious and absurd a plot should end, in the ruin of its contrivers. In the mean time, Cecil quietly extricated himself, and, having been successively patronized by Henry, by Somerset, and by Northumberland, continued to flourish under the protection of Mary.

He had no aspirations after the crown of martyrdom. He confessed himself, therefore, with great decorum, heard mass in Wimbledon Church at Easter, and, for the better ordering of his spiritual concerns, took a priest into his house. Dr. Nares, whose simplicity passes that of any casuist with whom we are acquainted, vindicates his hero by assuring us that this was not superstition, but pure unmixed hypocrisy. "That he did in some manner conform, we shall not be able, in the face of existing documents, to deny; while we feel in our own minds abundantly satisfied, that, during this very trying reign, he never abandoned the prospect of another revolution in favour of Protestantism." In another place, the Doctor tells us, that Cecil went to mass "with no idolatrous intention." Nobody, we believe, ever accused him of idolatrous intentions. The very ground of the charge against him is that he

Digitized by Google

had no idolatrous intentions. We never should have blamed him if he had really gone to Wimbledon Church, with the feelings of a good Catholic, to worship the host. Dr. Nares speaks in several places with just severity of the sophistry of the Jesuits, and with just admiration of the incomparable letters of Pascal. It is somewhat strange, therefore, that he should adopt, to the full extent, the jesuitical doctrine of the direction of intentions.

We do not blame Cecil for not choosing to be burned. The deep stain upon his memory is that, for differences of opinion for which he would risk nothing himself, he, in the day of his power, took away without scruple the lives of others. One of the excuses suggested in these Memoirs for his conforming, during the reign of Mary, to the Church of Rome, is that he may have been of the same mind with those German Protestants who were called Adiaphorists, and who considered the popish rites as matters indifferent. Melancthon was one of these moderate persons, and "appears," says Dr. Nares, "to have gone greater lengths than any imputed to Lord Burleigh." We should have thought this not only an excuse, but a complete vindication, if Cecil had been an Adiaphorist for the benefit of others as well as for his own. If the popish rites were matters of so little moment that a good Protestant might lawfully practise them for his safety, how could it be just or humane that a Papist should be hanged, drawn, and quartered, for practising them from a sense of duty? Unhappily these non-essentials soon became matters of life and death. Just at the very time at which Cecil attained the highest point of power and favour, an Act of Parliament was passed by which the penalties of high treason were denounced

Digitized by Google

against persons who should do in sincerity what he had done from cowardice.

Early in the reign of Mary, Cecil was employed in a mission scarcely consistent with the character of a zealous Protestant. He was sent to escort the Papal Legate, Cardinal Pole, from Brussels to London. That great body of moderate persons who cared more for the quiet of the realm than for the controverted points which were in issue between the Churches seem to have placed their chief hope in the wisdom and humanity of the gentle Cardinal. Cecil, it is clear, cultivated the friendship of Pole with great assiduity, and received great advantage from the Legate's protection.

But the best protection of Cecil, during the gloomy and disastrous reign of Mary, was that which he derived from his own prudence and from his own temper, a prudence which could never be lulled into carelessness, a temper which could never be irritated into rashness. The Papists could find no occasion against him. Yet he did not lose the esteem even of those sterner Protestants who had preferred exile to recantation. He attached himself to the persecuted heiress of the throne, and entitled himself to her gratitude and confidence. Yet he continued to receive marks of favour from the Queen. In the House of Commons, he put himself at the head of the party opposed to the Court. Yet, so guarded was his language that, even when some of those who acted with him were imprisoned by the Privy Council, he escaped with impunity.

At length Mary died: Elizabeth succeeded; and Cecil rose at once to greatness. He was sworn in Privy-councillor and Secretary of State to the new sovereign before he left her prison of Hatfield; and he continued to serve her during forty years, without

Digitized by Google

intermission, in the highest employments. His abilities were precisely those which keep men long in power. He belonged to the class of the Walpoles, the Pelhams, and the Liverpools, not to that of the St. Johns, the Carterets, the Chathams, and the Cannings. If he had been a man of original genius and of an enterprising spirit, it would have been scarcely possible for him to keep his power or even his head. There was not room in one government for an Elizabeth and a Richelieu. What the haughty daughter of Henry needed, was a moderate, cautious, flexible minister, skilled in the details of business, competent to advise, but not aspiring to command. And such a minister she found in Burleigh. No arts could shake the confidence which she reposed in her old and trusty servant. The courtly graces of Leicester, the brilliant talents and accomplishments of Essex, touched the fancy, perhaps the heart, of the woman; but no rival could deprive the Treasurer of the place which he possessed in the favour of the Queen. She sometimes chid him sharply; but he was the man whom she delighted to honour. For Burleigh, she forgot her usual parsimony both of wealth and of dignities. For Burleigh, she relaxed that severe etiquette to which she was unreasonably attached. Every other person to whom she addressed her speech, or on whom the glance of her eagle eye fell, instantly sank on his knee. For Burleigh alone, a chair was set in her presence; and there the old minister, by birth only a plain Lincolnshire esquire, took his ease, while the haughty heirs of the Fitzalans and the De Veres humbled themselves to the dust around him. At length, having survived all his early coadjutors, and rivals, he died full of years and honours. His royal mistress visited him on his

Digitized by Google

death-bed, and cheered him with assurances of her affection and esteem; and his power passed, with little diminution, to a son who inherited his abilities, and whose mind had been formed by his counsels.

The life of Burleigh was commensurate with one of the most important periods in the history of the world. It exactly measures the time during which the House of Austria held decided superiority and aspired to universal dominion. In the year in which Burleigh was born, Charles the Fifth obtained the imperial crown. In the year in which Burleigh died, the vast designs which had, during near a century, kept Europe in constant agitation, were buried in the same grave with the proud and sullen Philip.

The life of Burleigh was commensurate also with the period during which a great moral revolution was effected, a revolution the consequences of which were felt, not only in the cabinets of princes, but at half the firesides in Christendom. He was born when the great religious schism was just commencing. He lived to see that schism complete, and to see a line of demarcation, which, since his death, has been very little altered, strongly drawn between Protestant and Catholic Europe.

The only event of modern times which can be properly compared with the Reformation is the French Revolution, or, to speak more accurately, that great revolution of political feeling which took place in almost every part of the civilised world during the eighteenth century, and which obtained in France its most terrible and signal triumph. Each of these memorable events may be described as a rising up of the human reason against a Caste. The one was a

Digitized by Google

struggle of the laity against the clergy for intellectual liberty; the other was a struggle of the people against princes and nobles for political liberty. In both cases, the spirit of innovation was at first encouraged by the class to which it was likely to be most prejudicial. It was under the patronage of Frederic, of Catherine, of Joseph, and of the grandees of France, that the philosophy which afterwards threatened all the thrones and aristocracies of Europe with destruction first became formidable. The ardour with which men betook themselves to liberal studies, at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, was zealously encouraged by the heads of that very church to which liberal studies were destined to be fatal. In both cases, when the explosion came, it came with a violence which appalled and disgusted many of those who had previously been distinguished by the freedom of their opinions. The violence of the democratic party in France made Burke a Tory and Alfieri a courtier. The violence of the chiefs of the German schism made Erasmus a defender of abuses, and turned the author of Utopia into a persecutor. In both cases, the convulsion which had overthrown deeply seated errors, shook all the principles on which society rests to their very foundations. The minds of men were unsettled. It seemed for a time that all order and morality were about to perish with the prejudices with which they had been long and intimately associated. Frightful cruelties were committed. Immense masses of property were confiscated. Every part of Europe swarmed with exiles. In moody and turbulent spirits zeal soured into malignity, or foamed into madness. From the political agitation of the eighteenth century sprang the Jacobins.

Digitized by Google

From the religious agitation of the sixteenth century sprang the Anabaptists. The partisans of Robespierre robbed and murdered in the name of fraternity and equality. The followers of Kniperdoling robbed and murdered in the name of Christian liberty. The feeling of patriotism was, in many parts of Europe, almost wholly extinguished. All the old maxims of foreign policy were changed. Physical boundaries were superseded by moral boundaries. Nations made war on each other with new arms, with arms which no fortifications, however strong by nature or by art, could resist, with arms before which rivers parted like the Jordan, and ramparts fell down like the walls of Jericho. The great masters of fleets and armies were often reduced to confess, like Milton's warlike angel, how hard they found it

> "To exclude
> Spiritual substance with corporeal bar."

Europe was divided, as Greece had been divided during the period concerning which Thucydides wrote. The conflict was not, as it is in ordinary times, between state and state, but between two omnipresent factions, each of which was in some places dominant and in other places oppressed, but which, openly or covertly, carried on their strife in the bosom of every society. No man asked whether another belonged to the same country with himself, but whether he belonged to the same sect. Party-spirit seemed to justify and consecrate acts which, in any other times, would have been considered as the foulest of treasons. The French emigrant saw nothing disgraceful in bringing Austrian and Prussian hussars to Paris. The Irish or Italian democrat saw no impropriety in serving the French Directory against his own native government.

Digitized by Google

So, in the sixteenth century, the fury of theological factions suspended all national animosities and jealousies. The Spaniards were invited into France by the League; the English were invited into France by the Huguenots.

We by no means intend to underrate or to palliate the crimes and excesses which, during the last generation, were produced by the spirit of democracy. But, when we hear men zealous for the Protestant religion, constantly represent the French Revolution as radically and essentially evil on account of those crimes and excesses, we cannot but remember that the deliverance of our ancestors from the house of their spiritual bondage was effected "by plagues and by signs, by wonders and by war." We cannot but remember that, as in the case of the French Revolution, so also in the case of the Reformation, those who rose up against tyranny were themselves deeply tainted with the vices which tyranny engenders. We cannot but remember that libels scarcely less scandalous than those of Hebert, mummeries scarcely less absurd than those of Clootz, and crimes scarcely less atrocious than those of Marat, disgrace the early history of Protestantism. The Reformation is an event long passed. That volcano has spent its rage. The wide waste produced by its outbreak is forgotten. The landmarks which were swept away have been replaced. The ruined edifices have been repaired. The lava has covered with a rich incrustation the fields which it once devastated, and, after having turned a beautiful and fruitful garden into a desert, has again turned the desert into a still more beautiful and fruitful garden. The second great irruption is not yet over. The marks of its ravages are still all around us. The ashes are still hot beneath

Digitized by Google

our feet. In some directions the deluge of fire still continues to spread. Yet experience surely entitles us to believe, that this explosion, like that which preceded it, will fertilize the soil which it has devastated. Already, in those parts which have suffered most severely, rich cultivation and secure dwellings have begun to appear amidst the waste. The more we read of the history of past ages, the more we observe the signs of our own times, the more do we feel our hearts filled and swelled up by a good hope for the future destinies of the human race.

The history of the Reformation in England is full of strange problems. The most prominent and extraordinary phenomenon which it presents to us is the gigantic strength of the government contrasted with the feebleness of the religious parties. During the twelve or thirteen years which followed the death of Henry the Eighth, the religion of the state was thrice changed. Protestantism was established by Edward; the Catholic Church was restored by Mary; Protestantism was again established by Elizabeth. The faith of the nation seemed to depend on the personal inclinations of the sovereign. Nor was this all. An established church was then, as a matter of course, a persecuting church. Edward persecuted Catholics. Mary persecuted Protestants. Elizabeth persecuted Catholics again. The father of those three sovereigns had enjoyed the pleasure of persecuting both sects at once, and had sent to death, on the same hurdle, the heretic who denied the real presence, and the traitor who denied the royal supremacy. There was nothing in England like that fierce and bloody opposition which, in France, each of the religious factions in its turn offered to the government. We had neither a

Digitized by Google

Coligny nor a Mayenne, neither a Moncontour nor an Ivry. No English city braved sword and famine for the reformed doctrines with the spirit of Rochelle, or for the Catholic doctrines with the spirit of Paris. Neither sect in England formed a League. Neither sect extorted a recantation from the sovereign. Neither sect could obtain from an adverse sovereign even a toleration. The English Protestants, after several years of domination, sank down with scarcely a struggle under the tyranny of Mary. The Catholics, after having regained and abused their old ascendency, submitted patiently to the severe rule of Elizabeth. Neither Protestants nor Catholics engaged in any great and well organized scheme of resistance. A few wild and tumultuous risings, suppressed as soon as they appeared, a few dark conspiracies in which only a small number of desperate men engaged, such were the utmost efforts made by these two parties to assert the most sacred of human rights, attacked by the most odious tyranny.

The explanation of these circumstances which has generally been given is very simple, but by no means satisfactory. The power of the crown, it is said, was then at its height, and was in fact despotic. This solution, we own, seems to us to be no solution at all. It has long been the fashion, a fashion introduced by Mr. Hume, to describe the English monarchy in the sixteenth century as an absolute monarchy. And such undoubtedly it appears to a superficial observer. Elizabeth, it is true, often spoke to her parliaments in language as haughty and imperious as that which the Great Turk would use to his divan. She punished with great severity members of the House of Commons who, in her opinion, carried the freedom of debate too far.

Digitized by Google

She assumed the power of legislating by means of proclamations. She imprisoned her subjects without bringing them to a legal trial. Torture was often employed, in defiance of the laws of England, for the purpose of extorting confessions from those who were shut up in her dungeons. The authority of the Star-Chamber and of the Ecclesiastical Commission was at its highest point. Severe restraints were imposed on political and religious discussion. The number of presses was at one time limited. No man could print without a license; and every work had to undergo the scrutiny of the Primate, or the Bishop of London. Persons whose writings were displeasing to the court were cruelly mutilated, like Stubbs, or put to death, like Penry. Nonconformity was severely punished. The Queen prescribed the exact rule of religious faith and discipline; and whoever departed from that rule, either to the right or to the left, was in danger of severe penalties.

Such was this government. Yet we know that it was loved by the great body of those who lived under it. We know that, during the fierce contests of the sixteenth century, both the hostile parties spoke of the time of Elizabeth as of a golden age. That great Queen has now been lying two hundred and thirty years in Henry the Seventh's chapel. Yet her memory is still dear to the hearts of a free people.

The truth seems to be that the government of the Tudors was, with a few occasional deviations, a popular government, under the forms of despotism. At first sight, it may seem that the prerogatives of Elizabeth were not less ample than those of Lewis the Fourteenth, and her parliaments were as obsequious as his parliaments, that her warrant had as much authority as

Digitized by Google

his *lettre-de-cachet*. The extravagance with which her courtiers eulogized her personal and mental charms went beyond the adulation of Boileau and Moliere. Lewis would have blushed to receive from those who composed the gorgeous circles of Marli and Versailles such outward marks of servitude as the haughty Britoness exacted of all who approached her. But the authority of Lewis rested on the support of his army. The authority of Elizabeth rested solely on the support of her people. Those who say that her power was absolute do not sufficiently consider in what her power consisted. Her power consisted in the willing obedience of her subjects, in their attachment to her person and to her office, in their respect for the old line from which she sprang, in their sense of the general security which they enjoyed under her government. These were the means, and the only means, which she had at her command for carrying her decrees into execution, for resisting foreign enemies, and for crushing domestic treason. There was not a ward in the city, there was not a hundred in any shire in England, which could not have overpowered the handful of armed men who composed her household. If a hostile sovereign threatened invasion, if an ambitious noble raised the standard of revolt, she could have recourse only to the train-bands of her capital and the array of her counties, to the citizens and yeomen of England, commanded by the merchants and esquires of England.

Thus, when intelligence arrived of the vast preparations which Philip was making for the subjugation of the realm, the first person to whom the government thought of applying for assistance was the Lord Mayor of London. They sent to ask him what force the city would engage to furnish for the defence of the kingdom

Digitized by Google

against the Spaniards. The Mayor and Common Council, in return, desired to know what force the Queen's Highness wished them to furnish. The answer was, fifteen ships and five thousand men. The Londoners deliberated on the matter, and, two days after, "humbly entreated the council, in sign of their perfect love and loyalty to prince and country, to accept ten thousand men, and thirty ships amply furnished."

People who could give such signs as these of their loyalty were by no means to be misgoverned with impunity. The English in the sixteenth century were, beyond all doubt, a free people. They had not, indeed, the outward show of freedom; but they had the reality. They had not as good a constitution as we have; but they had that without which the best constitution is as useless as the king's proclamation against vice and immorality, that which, without any constitution, keeps rulers in awe, force, and the spirit to use it. Parliaments, it is true, were rarely held, and were not very respectfully treated. The great charter was often violated. But the people had a security against gross and systematic misgovernment, far stronger than all the parchment that was ever marked with the sign manual, and than all the wax that was ever pressed by the great seal.

It is a common error in politics to confound means with ends. Constitutions, charters, petitions of right, declarations of right, representative assemblies, electoral colleges, are not good governments; nor do they, even when most elaborately constructed, necessarily produce good government. Laws exist in vain for those who have not the courage and the means to defend them. Electors meet in vain where want makes them the

Digitized by Google

slaves of the landlord, or where superstition makes them the slaves of the priest. Representative assemblies sit in vain unless they have at their command, in the last resort, the physical power which is necessary to make their deliberations free, and their votes effectual.

The Irish are better represented in parliament than the Scotch, who indeed are not represented at all.[1] But are the Irish better governed than the Scotch? Surely not. This circumstance has of late been used as an argument against reform. It proves nothing against reform. It proves only this, that laws have no magical, no supernatural virtue; that laws do not act like Aladdin's lamp or Prince Ahmed's apple; that priestcraft, that ignorance, that the rage of contending factions, may make good institutions useless; that intelligence, sobriety, industry, moral freedom, firm union, may supply in a great measure the defects of the worst representative system. A people whose education and habits are such, that, in every quarter of the world, they rise above the mass of those with whom they mix, as surely as oil rises to the top of water, a people of such temper and self-government that the wildest popular excesses recorded in their history partake of the gravity of judicial proceedings, and of the solemnity of religious rites, a people whose national pride and mutual attachment have passed into a proverb, a people whose high and fierce spirit, so forcibly described in the haughty motto which encircles their thistle, preserved their independence, during a struggle of centuries, from the encroachments of wealthier and more powerful neighbours, such a people cannot be

[1] It must be remembered that this was written before the passing of the reform act.

Digitized by Google

long oppressed. Any government, however constituted, must respect their wishes and tremble at their discontents. It is indeed most desirable that such a people should exercise a direct influence on the conduct of affairs, and should make their wishes known through constitutional organs. But some influence, direct or indirect, they will assuredly possess. Some organ, constitutional or unconstitutional, they will assuredly find. They will be better governed under a good constitution than under a bad constitution. But they will be better governed under the worst constitution than some other nations under the best. In any general classification of constitutions, the constitution of Scotland must be reckoned as one of the worst, perhaps as the worst, in Christian Europe. Yet the Scotch are not ill governed, and the reason is simply that they will not bear to be ill governed.

In some of the oriental monarchies, in Afghanistan for example, though there exists nothing which an European publicist would call a Constitution, the sovereign generally governs in conformity with certain rules established for the public benefit; and the sanction of those rules is, that every Afghan approves them, and that every Afghan is a soldier.

The monarchy of England in the sixteenth century was a monarchy of this kind. It is called an absolute monarchy, because little respect was paid by the Tudors to those institutions which we have been accustomed to consider as the sole checks on the power of the sovereign. A modern Englishman can hardly understand how the people can have had any real security for good government under kings who levied benevolences, and chid the House of Commons as they would have chid a pack of dogs. People do not sufficiently

Digitized by Google

consider that, though the legal checks were feeble, the natural checks were strong. There was one great and effectual limitation on the royal authority, the knowledge that, if the patience of the nation were severely tried, the nation would put forth its strength, and that its strength would be found irresistible. If a large body of Englishmen became thoroughly discontented, instead of presenting requisitions, holding large meetings, passing resolutions, signing petitions, forming associations and unions, they rose up; they took their halberds and their bows; and, if the sovereign was not sufficiently popular to find among his subjects other halberds and other bows to oppose to the rebels, nothing remained for him but a repetition of the horrible scenes of Berkeley and Pomfret. He had no regular army which could, by its superior arms and its superior skill, overawe or vanquish the sturdy Commons of his realm, abounding in the native hardihood of Englishmen, and trained in the simple discipline of the militia.

It has been said that the Tudors were as absolute as the Cæsars. Never was parallel so unfortunate. The government of the Tudors was the direct opposite to the government of Augustus and his successors. The Cæsars ruled despotically, by means of a great standing army, under the decent forms of a republican constitution. They called themselves citizens. They mixed unceremoniously with other citizens. In theory they were only the elective magistrates of a free commonwealth. Instead of arrogating to themselves despotic power, they acknowledged allegiance to the senate. They were merely the lieutenants of that venerable body. They mixed in debate. They even appeared as advocates before the courts of law. Yet they could safely indulge in the wildest freaks of

Digitized by Google

cruelty and rapacity, while their legions remained faithful. Our Tudors, on the other hand, under the titles and forms of monarchical supremacy, were essentially popular magistrates. They had no means of protecting themselves against the public hatred; and they were therefore compelled to court the public favour. To enjoy all the state and all the personal indulgences of absolute power, to be adored with Oriental prostrations, to dispose at will of the liberty and even of the life of ministers and courtiers, this the nation granted to the Tudors. But the condition on which they were suffered to be the tyrants of Whitehall was that they should be the mild and paternal sovereigns of England. They were under the same restraints with regard to their people under which a military despot is placed with regard to his army. They would have found it as dangerous to grind their subjects with cruel taxation as Nero would have found it to leave his prætorians unpaid. Those who immediately surrounded the royal person, and engaged in the hazardous game of ambition, were exposed to the most fearful dangers. Buckingham, Cromwell, Surrey, Seymour of Sudeley, Somerset, Northumberland, Suffolk, Norfolk, Essex, perished on the scaffold. But in general the country gentleman hunted and the merchant traded in peace. Even Henry, as cruel as Domitian, but far more politic, contrived, while reeking with the blood of the Lamiæ, to be a favourite with the cobblers.

The Tudors committed very tyrannical acts. But in their ordinary dealings with the people they were not, and could not safely be, tyrants. Some excesses were easily pardoned. For the nation was proud of the high and fiery blood of its magnificent princes, and

Digitized by Google

saw, in many proceedings which a lawyer would even then have condemned, the outbreak of the same noble spirit which so manfully hurled foul scorn at Parma and at Spain. But to this endurance there was a limit. If the government ventured to adopt measures which the people really felt to be oppressive, it was soon compelled to change its course. When Henry the Eighth attempted to raise a forced loan of unusual amount by proceedings of unusual rigour, the opposition which he encountered was such as appalled even his stubborn and imperious spirit. The people, we are told, said that, if they were treated thus, "then were it worse than the taxes of France; and England should be bond, and not free." The county of Suffolk rose in arms. The king prudently yielded to an opposition which, if he had persisted, would, in all probability, have taken the form of a general rebellion. Towards the close of the reign of Elizabeth, the people felt themselves aggrieved by the monopolies. The Queen, proud and courageous as she was, shrank from a contest with the nation, and, with admirable sagacity, conceded all that her subjects had demanded, while it was yet in her power to concede with dignity and grace.

It cannot be imagined that a people who had in their own hands the means of checking their princes would suffer any prince to impose upon them a religion generally detested. It is absurd to suppose that, if the nation had been decidedly attached to the Protestant faith, Mary could have reëstablished the Papal supremacy. It is equally absurd to suppose that, if the nation had been zealous for the ancient religion, Elizabeth could have restored the Protestant Church. The truth is, that the people were not disposed to engage in

Digitized by Google

a struggle either for the new or for the old doctrines. Abundance of spirit was shown when it seemed likely that Mary would resume her father's grants of church property, or that she would sacrifice the interests of England to the husband whom she regarded with unmerited tenderness. That queen found that it would be madness to attempt the restoration of the abbey lands. She found that her subjects would never suffer her to make her hereditary kingdom a fief of Castile. On these points she encountered a steady resistance, and was compelled to give way. If she was able to establish the Catholic worship and to persecute those who would not conform to it, it was evidently because the people cared far less for the Protestant religion than for the rights of property and for the independence of the English crown. In plain words, they did not think the difference between the hostile sects worth a struggle. There was undoubtedly a zealous Protestant party and a zealous Catholic party. But both these parties were, we believe, very small. We doubt, whether both together made up, at the time of Mary's death, the twentieth part of the nation. The remaining nineteen twentieths halted between the two opinions, and were not disposed to risk a revolution in the government, for the purpose of giving to either of the extreme factions an advantage over the other.

We possess no data which will enable us to compare with exactness the force of the two sects. Mr. Butler asserts that, even at the accession of James the First, a majority of the population of England were Catholics. This is pure assertion; and is not only unsupported by evidence, but, we think, completely disproved by the strongest evidence. Dr. Lingard is of opinion that the Catholics were one half of the nation in the middle of

Digitized by Google

the reign of Elizabeth. Rushton says that, when Elizabeth came to the throne, the Catholics were two thirds of the nation, and the Protestants only one third. The most judicious and impartial of English historians, Mr. Hallam, is, on the contrary, of opinion, that two thirds were Protestants, and only one third Catholics. To us, we must confess, it seems incredible that, if the Protestants were really two to one, they should have borne the government of Mary, or that, if the Catholics were really two to one, they should have borne the government of Elizabeth. We are at a loss to conceive how a sovereign who has no standing army, and whose power rests solely on the loyalty of his subjects, can continue for years to persecute a religion to which the majority of his subjects are sincerely attached. In fact, the Protestants did rise up against one sister, and the Catholics against the other. Those risings clearly showed how small and feeble both the parties were. Both in the one case and in the other the nation ranged itself on the side of the government, and the insurgents were speedily put down and punished. The Kentish gentlemen who took up arms for the reformed doctrines against Mary, and the great Northern Earls who displayed the banner of the Five Wounds against Elizabeth, were alike considered by the great body of their countrymen as wicked disturbers of the public peace.

The account which Cardinal Bentivoglio gave of the state of religion in England well deserves consideration. The zealous Catholics he reckoned at one thirtieth part of the nation. The people who would without the least scruple become Catholics, if the Catholic religion were established, he estimated at four fifths of the nation. We believe this account to have been very near the truth. We believe that the people,

Digitized by Google

whose minds were made up on either side, who were inclined to make any sacrifice or run any risk for either religion, were very few. Each side had a few enterprising champions, and a few stout-hearted martyrs; but the nation, undetermined in its opinions and feelings, resigned itself implicitly to the guidance of the government, and lent to the sovereign for the time being an equally ready aid against either of the extreme parties.

We are very far from saying that the English of that generation were irreligious. They held firmly those doctrines which are common to the Catholic and to the Protestant theology. But they had no fixed opinion as to the matters in dispute between the churches. They were in a situation resembling that of those Borderers whom Sir Walter Scott has described with so much spirit,

> "Who sought the beeves that made their broth,
> In England and in Scotland both."

And who

> "Nine times outlawed had been
> By England's king and Scotland's queen."

They were sometimes Protestants, sometimes Catholics; sometimes half Protestants half Catholics.

The English had not, for ages, been bigoted Papists. In the fourteenth century, the first and perhaps the greatest of the reformers, John Wickliffe, had stirred the public mind to its inmost depths. During the same century, a scandalous schism in the Catholic Church had diminished, in many parts of Europe, the reverence in which the Roman pontiffs were held. It is clear that, a hundred years before the time of Luther, a great party in this kingdom was eager for a change at least as extensive as that which was sub-

Digitized by Google

sequently effected by Henry the Eighth. The House of Commons, in the reign of Henry the Fourth, proposed a confiscation of ecclesiastical property, more sweeping and violent even than that which took place under the administration of Thomas Cromwell; and, though defeated in this attempt, they succeeded in depriving the clerical order of some of its most oppressive privileges. The splendid conquests of Henry the Fifth turned the attention of the nation from domestic reform. The Council of Constance removed some of the grossest of those scandals which had deprived the Church of the public respect. The authority of that venerable synod propped up the sinking authority of the Popedom. A considerable reaction took place. It cannot, however, be doubted, that there was still some concealed Lollardism in England; or that many who did not absolutely dissent from any doctrine held by the Church of Rome were jealous of the wealth and power enjoyed by her ministers. At the very beginning of the reign of Henry the Eighth, a struggle took place between the clergy and the courts of law, in which the courts of law remained victorious. One of the bishops, on that occasion, declared that the common people entertained the strongest prejudices against his order, and that a clergyman had no chance of fair play before a lay tribunal. The London juries, he said, entertained such a spite to the Church that, if Abel were a priest, they would find him guilty of the murder of Cain. This was said a few months before the time when Martin Luther began to preach at Wittenburg against indulgences.

As the Reformation did not find the English bigoted Papists, so neither was it conducted in such a manner as to make them zealous Protestants. It was not under

Digitized by Google

the direction of men like that fiery Saxon who swore that he would go to Worms, though he had to face as many devils as there were tiles on the houses, or like that brave Switzer who was struck down while praying in front of the ranks of Zurich. No preacher of religion had the same power here which Calvin had at Geneva and Knox in Scotland. The government put itself early at the head of the movement, and thus acquired power to regulate, and occasionally to arrest, the movement.

To many persons it appears extraordinary that Henry the Eighth should have been able to maintain himself so long in an intermediate position between the Catholic and Protestant parties. Most extraordinary it would indeed be, if we were to suppose that the nation consisted of none but decided Catholics and decided Protestants. The fact is that the great mass of the people was neither Catholic nor Protestant, but was, like its sovereign, midway between the two sects. Henry, in that very part of his conduct which has been represented as most capricious and inconsistent, was probably following a policy far more pleasing to the majority of his subjects than a policy like that of Edward, or a policy like that of Mary, would have been. Down even to the very close of the reign of Elizabeth, the people were in a state somewhat resembling that in which, as Machiavelli says, the inhabitants of the Roman empire were, during the transition from heathenism to Christianity; "sendo la maggior parte di loro incerti a quale Dio dovessero ricorrere." They were generally, we think, favourable to the royal supremacy. They disliked the policy of the Court of Rome. Their spirit rose against the interference of a foreign priest with their national concerns. The bull

Digitized by Google

which pronounced sentence of deposition against Elizabeth, the plots which were formed against her life, the usurpation of her titles by the Queen of Scotland, the hostility of Philip, excited their strongest indignation. The cruelties of Bonner were remembered with disgust. Some parts of the new system, the use of the English language, for example, in public worship, and the communion in both kinds, were undoubtedly popular. On the other hand, the early lessons of the nurse and the priest were not forgotten. The ancient ceremonies were long remembered with affectionate reverence. A large portion of the ancient theology lingered to the last in the minds which had been imbued with it in childhood.

The best proof that the religion of the people was of this mixed kind is furnished by the Drama of that age. No man would bring unpopular opinions prominently forward in a play intended for representation. And we may safely conclude, that feelings and opinions which pervade the whole Dramatic Literature of a generation, are feelings and opinions of which the men of that generation generally partook.

The greatest and most popular dramatists of the Elizabethan age treat religious subjects in a very remarkable manner. They speak respectfully of the fundamental doctrines of Christianity. But they speak neither like Catholics nor like Protestants, but like persons who are wavering between the two systems, or who have made a system for themselves out of parts selected from both. They seem to hold some of the Romish rites and doctrines in high respect. They treat the vow of celibacy, for example, so tempting, and, in later times, so common a subject for ribaldry, with mysterious reverence. Almost every member of a religious order

Digitized by Google

whom they introduce is a holy and venerable man. We remember in their plays nothing resembling the coarse ridicule with which the Catholic religion and its ministers were assailed, two generations later, by dramatists, who wished to please the multitude. We remember no Friar Dominic, no Father Foigard, among the characters drawn by those great poets. The scene at the close of the Knight of Malta might have been written by a fervent Catholic. Massinger shows a great fondness for ecclesiastics of the Romish Church, and has even gone so far as to bring a virtuous and interesting Jesuit on the stage. Ford, in that fine play which it is painful to read and scarcely decent to name, assigns a highly creditable part to the Friar. The partiality of Shakspeare for Friars is well known. In Hamlet, the Ghost complains that he died without extreme unction, and, in defiance of the article which condemns the doctrine of purgatory, declares that he is

> "Confined to fast in fires,
> Till the foul crimes, done in his days of nature,
> Are burnt and purged away."

These lines, we suspect, would have raised a tremendous storm in the theatre at any time during the reign of Charles the Second. They were clearly not written by a zealous Protestant, or for zealous Protestants. Yet the author of King John and Henry the Eighth was surely no friend to papal supremacy.

There is, we think, only one solution of the phænomena which we find in the history and in the drama of that age. The religion of the English was a mixed religion, like that of the Samaritan settlers, described in the second book of Kings, who "feared the Lord, and served their graven images;" like that of the Judaizing Christians who blended the ceremonies and

Digitized by Google

doctrines of the synagogue with those of the church; like that of the Mexican Indians, who, during many generations after the subjugation of their race, continued to unite with the rites learned from their conquerors the worship of the grotesque idols which had been adored by Montezuma and Guatemozin.

These feelings were not confined to the populace. Elizabeth herself was by no means exempt from them. A crucifix, with wax-lights burning round it, stood in her private chapel. She always spoke with disgust and anger of the marriage of priests. "I was in horror," says Archbishop Parker, "to hear such words to come from her mild nature and Christian learned conscience, as she spake concerning God's holy ordinance and institution of matrimony." Burleigh prevailed on her to connive at the marriages of churchmen. But she would only connive; and the children sprung from such marriages were illegitimate till the accession of James the First.

That which is, as we have said, the great stain on the character of Burleigh is also the great stain on the character of Elizabeth. Being herself an Adiaphorist, having no scruple about conforming to the Romish Church when conformity was necessary to her own safety, retaining to the last moment of her life a fondness for much of the doctrine and much of the ceremonial of that church, she yet subjected that church to a persecution even more odious than the persecution with which her sister had harassed the Protestants. We say more odious. For Mary had at least the plea of fanaticism. She did nothing for her religion which she was not prepared to suffer for it. She had held it firmly under persecution. She fully believed it to be essential to salvation. If she burned the bodies of her

Digitized by Google

subjects, it was in order to rescue their souls. Elizabeth had no such pretext. In opinion, she was little more than half a Protestant. She had professed, when it suited her, to be wholly a Catholic. There is an excuse, a wretched excuse, for the massacres of Piedmont and the *Autos de fe* of Spain. But what can be said in defence of a ruler who is at once indifferent and intolerant?

If the great Queen, whose memory is still held in just veneration by Englishmen, had possessed sufficient virtue and sufficient enlargement of mind to adopt those principles which More, wiser in speculation than in action, had avowed in the preceding generation, and by which the excellent L'Hospital regulated his conduct in her own time, how different would be the colour of the whole history of the last two hundred and fifty years! She had the happiest opportunity ever vouchsafed to any sovereign of establishing perfect freedom of conscience throughout her dominions, without danger to her government, without scandal to any large party among her subjects. The nation, as it was clearly ready to profess either religion, would, beyond all doubt, have been ready to tolerate both. Unhappily for her own glory and for the public peace, she adopted a policy from the effects of which the empire is still suffering. The yoke of the Established Church was pressed down on the people till they would bear it no longer. Then a reaction came. Another reaction followed. To the tyranny of the establishment succeeded the tumultuous conflict of sects, infuriated by manifold wrongs, and drunk with unwonted freedom. To the conflict of sects succeeded again the cruel domination of one persecuting church. At length oppression put off its most horrible form, and took a milder

Digitized by Google

aspect. The penal laws which had been framed for the protection of the established church were abolished. But exclusions and disabilities still remained. These exclusions and disabilities, after having generated the most fearful discontents, after having rendered all government in one part of the kingdom impossible, after having brought the state to the very brink of ruin, have, in our times, been removed, but, though removed, have left behind them a rankling which may last for many years. It is melancholy to think with what ease Elizabeth might have united all conflicting sects under the shelter of the same impartial laws and the same paternal throne, and thus have placed the nation in the same situation, as far as the rights of conscience are concerned, in which we at last stand, after all the heart-burnings, the persecutions, the conspiracies, the seditions, the revolutions, the judicial murders, the civil wars of ten generations.

This is the dark side of her character. Yet she surely was a great woman. Of all the sovereigns who exercised a power which was seemingly absolute, but which in fact depended for support on the love and confidence of their subjects, she was by far the most illustrious. It has often been alleged as an excuse for the misgovernment of her successors that they only followed her example, that precedents might be found in the transactions of her reign for persecuting the Puritans, for levying money without the sanction of the House of Commons, for confining men without bringing them to trial, for interfering with the liberty of parliamentary debate. All this may be true. But it is no good plea for her successors; and for this plain reason, that they were her successors. She governed one generation, they governed another; and between

Digitized by Google

the two generations there was almost as little in common as between the people of two different countries. It was not by looking at the particular measures which Elizabeth had adopted, but by looking at the great general principles of her government, that those who followed her were likely to learn the art of managing untractable subjects. If, instead of searching the records of her reign for precedents which might seem to vindicate the mutilation of Prynne and the imprisonment of Eliot, the Stuarts had attempted to discover the fundamental rules which guided her conduct in all her dealings with her people, they would have perceived that their policy was then most unlike to hers, when to a superficial observer it would have seemed most to resemble hers. Firm, haughty, sometimes unjust and cruel in her proceedings towards individuals or towards small parties, she avoided with care, or retracted with speed, every measure which seemed likely to alienate the great mass of the people. She gained more honour and more love by the manner in which she repaired her errors than she would have gained by never committing errors. If such a man as Charles the First had been in her place when the whole nation was crying out against the monopolies, he would have refused all redress. He would have dissolved the Parliament, and imprisoned the most popular members. He would have called another Parliament. He would have given some vague and delusive promises of relief in return for subsidies. When entreated to fulfil his promises, he would have again dissolved the Parliament, and again imprisoned his leading opponents. The country would have become more agitated than before. The next House of Commons would have been more unmanageable than

Digitized by Google

that which preceded it. The tyrant would have agreed to all that the nation demanded. He would have solemnly ratified an act abolishing monopolies forever. He would have received a large supply in return for this concession; and within half a year new patents, more oppressive than those which had been cancelled, would have been issued by scores. Such was the policy which brought the heir of a long line of kings, in early youth the darling of his countrymen, to a prison and a scaffold.

Elizabeth, before the House of Commons could address her, took out of their mouths the words which they were about to utter in the name of the nation. Her promises went beyond their desires. Her performance followed close upon her promise. She did not treat the nation as an adverse party, as a party which had an interest opposed to hers, as a party to which she was to grant as few advantages as possible, and from which she was to extort as much money as possible. Her benefits were given, not sold; and, when once given, they were never withdrawn. She gave them too with a frankness, an effusion of heart, a princely dignity, a motherly tenderness, which enhanced their value. They were received by the sturdy country gentlemen who had come up to Westminster full of resentment, with tears of joy, and shouts of "God save the Queen." Charles the First gave up half the prerogatives of his crown to the Commons; and the Commons sent him in return the Grand Remonstrance.

We had intended to say something concerning that illustrious group of which Elizabeth is the central figure, that group which the last of the bards saw in vision from the top of Snowdon, encircling the Virgin Queen,

Digitized by Google

> "Many a baron bold,
> And gorgeous dames, and statesmen old
> In bearded majesty."

We had intended to say something concerning the dexterous Walsingham, the impetuous Oxford, the graceful Sackville, the all-accomplished Sydney; concerning Essex, the ornament of the court and of the camp, the model of chivalry, the munificent patron of genius, whom great virtues, great courage, great talents, the favour of his sovereign, the love of his countrymen, all that seemed to ensure a happy and glorious life, led to an early and an ignominious death; concerning Raleigh, the soldier, the sailor, the scholar, the courtier, the orator, the poet, the historian, the philosopher, whom we picture to ourselves, sometimes reviewing the Queen's guard, sometimes giving chase to a Spanish galleon, then answering the chiefs of the country party in the House of Commons, then again murmuring one of his sweet love-songs too near the ears of her Highness's maids of honour, and soon after pouring over the Talmud, or collating Polybius with Livy. We had intended also to say something concerning the literature of that splendid period, and especially concerning those two incomparable men, the Prince of Poets, and the Prince of Philosophers, who have made the Elizabethan age a more glorious and important era in the history of the human mind than the age of Pericles, of Augustus, or of Leo. But subjects so vast require a space far larger than we can at present afford. We therefore stop here, fearing that, if we proceed, our article may swell to a bulk exceeding that of all other reviews, as much as Dr. Nares's book exceeds the bulk of all other histories.

Digitized by Google

MIRABEAU.[1]

(*Edinburgh Review*, July, 1832.)

THIS is a very amusing and a very instructive book; but, even if it were less amusing and less instructive, it would still be interesting as a relic of a wise and virtuous man. M. Dumont was one of those persons, the care of whose fame belongs in an especial manner to mankind. For he was one of those persons who have, for the sake of mankind, neglected the care of their own fame. In his walk through life there was no obtrusiveness, no pushing, no elbowing, none of the little arts which bring forward little men. With every right to the head of the board, he took the lowest room, and well deserved to be greeted with — Friend, go up higher. Though no man was more capable of achieving for himself a separate and independent renown, he attached himself to others; he laboured to raise their fame; he was content to receive as his share of the reward the mere overflowings which redounded from the full measure of their glory. Not that he was of a servile and idolatrous habit of mind: — not that he was one of the tribe of Boswells, — those literary Gibeonites, born to be hewers of wood and drawers of water to the

[1] *Souvenirs sur Mirabeau, et sur les deux Premières Assemblées Législatives.* Par ETIENNE DUMONT, de Genève: ouvrage posthume publié par M. J. L. Duval, Membre du Conseil Représentatif du Canton du Genève. 8vo. Paris: 1832.

Digitized by Google

higher intellectual castes. Possessed of talents and acquirements which made him great, he wished only to be useful. In the prime of manhood, at the very time of life at which ambitious men are most ambitious, he was not solicitous to proclaim that he furnished information, arguments, and eloquence to Mirabeau. In his later years he was perfectly willing that his renown should merge in that of Mr. Bentham.

The services which M. Dumont has rendered to society can be fully appreciated only by those who have studied Mr. Bentham's works, both in their rude and in their finished state. The difference both for show and for use is as great as the difference between a lump of golden ore and a rouleau of sovereigns fresh from the mint. Of Mr. Bentham we would at all times speak with the reverence which is due to a great original thinker, and to a sincere and ardent friend of the human race. If a few weaknesses were mingled with his eminent virtues, — if a few errors insinuated themselves among the many valuable truths which he taught, — this is assuredly no time for noticing those weaknesses or those errors in an unkind or sarcastic spirit. A great man has gone from among us, full of years, of good works, and of deserved honours. In some of the highest departments in which the human intellect can exert itself he has not left his equal or his second behind him. From his contemporaries he has had, according to the usual lot, more or less than justice. He has had blind flatterers and blind detractors — flatterers who could see nothing but perfection in his style, detractors who could see nothing but nonsense in his matter. He will now have judges. Posterity will pronounce its calm and impartial decision; and that decision will, we firmly believe, place in the same rank

Digitized by Google

with Galileo, and with Locke, the man who found jurisprudence a gibberish and left it a science. Never was there a literary partnership so fortunate as that of Mr. Bentham and M. Dumont. The raw material which Mr. Bentham furnished was most precious; but it was unmarketable. He was, assuredly, at once a great logician and a great rhetorician. But the effect of his logic was injured by a vicious arrangement, and the effect of his rhetoric by a vicious style. His mind was vigorous, comprehensive, subtle, fertile of arguments, fertile of illustrations. But he spoke in an unknown tongue; and, that the congregation might be edified, it was necessary that some brother having the gift of interpretation should expound the invaluable jargon. His oracles were of high import; but they were traced on leaves and flung loose to the wind. So negligent was he of the arts of selection, distribution, and compression, that to persons who formed their judgment of him from his works in their undigested state he seemed to be the least systematic of all philosophers. The truth is, that his opinions formed a system, which, whether sound or unsound, is more exact, more entire, and more consistent with itself than any other. Yet to superficial readers of his works in their original form, and indeed to all readers of those works who did not bring great industry and great acuteness to the study, he seemed to be a man of a quick and ingenious but ill-regulated mind, — who saw truth only by glimpses, — who threw out many striking hints, but who had never thought of combining his doctrines in one harmonious whole.

M. Dumont was admirably qualified to supply what was wanting in Mr. Bentham. In the qualities in which the French writers surpass those of all other

Digitized by Google

nations, — neatness, clearness, precision, condensation, — he surpassed all French writers. If M. Dumont had never been born, Mr. Bentham would still have been a very great man. But he would have been great to himself alone. The fertility of his mind would have resembled the fertility of those vast American wildernesses in which blossoms and decays a rich but unprofitable vegetation, "wherewith the reaper filleth not his hand, neither he that bindeth up the sheaves his bosom." It would have been with his discoveries as it has been with the "Century of Inventions." His speculations on laws would have been of no more practical use than Lord Worcester's speculations on steam-engines. Some generations hence, perhaps, when legislation had found its Watt, an antiquarian might have published to the world the curious fact, that, in the reign of George the Third, there had been a man called Bentham, who had given hints of many discoveries made since his time, and who had really, for his age, taken a most philosophical view of the principles of jurisprudence.

Many persons have attempted to interpret between this powerful mind and the public. But, in our opinion, M. Dumont alone has succeeded. It is remarkable that, in foreign countries, where Mr. Bentham's works are known solely through the medium of the French version, his merit is almost universally acknowledged. Even those who are most decidedly opposed to his political opinions — the very chiefs of the Holy Alliance — have publicly testified their respect for him. In England, on the contrary, many persons who certainly entertained no prejudice against him on political grounds were long in the habit of mentioning him contemptuously. Indeed, what was said

Digitized by Google

of Bacon's Philosophy may be said of Bentham's. It was in little repute among us, till judgments in its favour came from beyond sea, and convinced us, to our shame, that we had been abusing and laughing at one of the greatest men of the age.

M. Dumont might easily have found employments more gratifying to personal vanity than that of arranging works not his own. But he could have found no employment more useful or more truly honourable. The book before us, hastily written as it is, contains abundant proof, if proof were needed, that he did not become an editor because he wanted the talents which would have made him eminent as a writer.

Persons who hold democratical opinions, and who have been accustomed to consider M. Dumont as one of their party, have been surprised and mortified to learn that he speaks with very little respect of the French Revolution and of its authors. Some zealous Tories have naturally expressed great satisfaction at finding their doctrines, in some respects, confirmed by the testimony of an unwilling witness. The date of the work, we think, explains every thing. If it had been written ten years earlier, or twenty years later, it would have been very different from what it is. It was written, neither during the first excitement of the Revolution, nor at that later period when the practical good produced by the Revolution had become manifest to the most prejudiced observers; but in those wretched times when the enthusiasm had abated, and the solid advantages were not yet fully seen. It was written in the year 1799,—a year in which the most sanguine friend of liberty might well feel some misgivings as to the effects of what the National Assembly had done. The evils which attend every great change had been

Digitized by Google

severely felt. The benefit was still to come. The price — a heavy price — had been paid. The thing purchased had not yet been delivered. Europe was swarming with French exiles. The fleets and armies of the second coalition were victorious. Within France, the reign of terror was over; but the reign of law had not commenced. There had been, indeed, during three or four years, a written Constitution, by which rights were defined and checks provided. But these rights had been repeatedly violated; and those checks had proved utterly inefficient. The laws which had been framed to secure the distinct authority of the executive magistrates and of the legislative assemblies — the freedom of election — the freedom of debate — the freedom of the press — the personal freedom of citizens — were a dead letter. The ordinary mode in which the Republic was governed was by *coups d'état*. On one occasion, the legislative councils were placed under military restraint by the directors. Then, again, directors were deposed by the legislative councils. Elections were set aside by the executive authority. Shiploads of writers and speakers were sent, without a legal trial, to die of fever in Guiana. France, in short, was in that state in which revolutions, effected by violence, almost always leave a nation. The habit of obedience had been lost. The spell of prescription had been broken. Those associations on which, far more than on any arguments about property and order, the authority of magistrates rests had completely passed away. The power of the government consisted merely in the physical force which it could bring to its support. Moral force it had none. It was itself a government sprung from a recent convulsion. Its own fundamental maxim was, that rebellion might be justifiable.

Digitized by Google

Its own existence proved that rebellion might be successful. The people had been accustomed, during several years, to offer resistance to the constituted authorities on the slightest provocation, and to see the constituted authorities yield to that resistance. The whole political world was "without form and void" — an incessant whirl of hostile atoms, which, every moment, formed some new combination. The only man who could fix the agitated elements of society in a stable form was following a wild vision of glory and empire through the Syrian deserts. The time was not yet come, when

> "Confusion heard his voice; and wild uproar
> Stood ruled:"

when, out of the chaos into which the old society had been resolved, were to rise a new dynasty, a new peerage, a new church, and a new code.

The dying words of Madame Roland, "Oh Liberty! how many crimes are committed in thy name!" were at that time echoed by many of the most upright and benevolent of mankind. M. Guizot has, in one of his admirable pamphlets, happily and justly described M. Lainé as "an honest and liberal man discouraged by the Revolution." This description, at the time when M. Dumont's Memoirs were written, would have applied to almost every honest and liberal man in Europe; and would, beyond all doubt, have applied to M. Dumont himself. To that fanatical worship of the all-wise and all-good people, which had been common a few years before, had succeeded an uneasy suspicion that the follies and vices of the people would frustrate all attempts to serve them. The wild and joyous exultation with which the meeting of the States-Gen-

Digitized by Google

eral and the fall of the Bastile had been hailed, had passed away. In its place was dejection, and a gloomy distrust of specious appearances. The philosophers and philanthropists had reigned. And what had their reign produced? Philosophy had brought with it mummeries as absurd as any which had been practised by the most superstitious zealot of the darkest age. Philanthropy had brought with it crimes as horrible as the massacre of St. Bartholomew. This was the emancipation of the human mind. These were the fruits of the great victory of reason over prejudice. France had rejected the faith of Pascal and Descartes as a nursery fable, that a courtezan might be her idol, and a madman her priest. She had asserted her freedom against Louis, that she might bow down before Robespierre. For a time men thought that all the boasted wisdom of the eighteenth century was folly; and that those hopes of great political and social ameliorations which had been cherished by Voltaire and Condorcet were utterly delusive.

Under the influence of these feelings, M. Dumont has gone so far as to say that the writings of Mr. Burke on the French Revolution, though disfigured by exaggeration, and though containing doctrines subversive of all public liberty, had been, on the whole, justified by events, and had probably saved Europe from great disasters. That such a man as the friend and fellow-labourer of Mr. Bentham should have expressed such an opinion is a circumstance which well deserves the consideration of uncharitable politicians. These Memoirs have not convinced us that the French Revolution was not a great blessing to mankind. But they have convinced us that very great indulgence is due to those who, while the Revolution was actually

Digitized by Google

taking place, regarded it with unmixed aversion and horror. We can perceive where their error lay. We can perceive that the evil was temporary, and the good durable. But we cannot be sure that, if our lot had been cast in their times, we should not, like them, have been discouraged and disgusted — that we should not, like them, have seen, in that great victory of the French people, only insanity and crime.

It is curious to observe how some men are applauded, and others reviled, for merely being what all their neighbours are, — for merely going passively down the stream of events, — for merely representing the opinions and passions of a whole generation. The friends of popular government ordinarily speak with extreme severity of Mr. Pitt, and with respect and tenderness of Mr. Canning. Yet the whole difference, we suspect, consisted merely in this, — that Mr. Pitt died in 1806, and Mr. Canning in 1827. During the years which were common to the public life of both, Mr. Canning was assuredly not a more liberal statesman than his patron. The truth is, that Mr. Pitt began his political life at the end of the American War, when the nation was suffering from the effects of corruption. He closed it in the midst of the calamities produced by the French Revolution, when the nation was still strongly impressed with the horrors of anarchy. He changed, undoubtedly. In his youth he had brought in reform bills. In his manhood he brought in gagging bills. But the change, though lamentable, was, in our opinion, perfectly natural, and might have been perfectly honest. He changed with the great body of his countrymen. Mr. Canning, on the other hand, entered into public life when Europe was in dread of the Jacobins. He closed his public life when Europe was suffering under

Digitized by Google

the tyranny of the Holy Alliance. He, too, changed with the nation. As the crimes of the Jacobins had turned the master into something very like a Tory, the events which followed the Congress of Vienna turned the pupil into something very like a Whig.

So much are men the creatures of circumstances. We see that, if M. Dumont had died in 1799, he would have died, to use the new cant word, a decided "Conservative." If Mr. Pitt had lived in 1832, it is our firm belief that he would have been a decided Reformer.

The judgment passed by M. Dumont in this work on the French Revolution must be taken with considerable allowances. It resembles a criticism on a play of which only the first act has been performed, or on a building from which the scaffolding has not yet been taken down. We have no doubt that, if the excellent author had revised these memoirs thirty years after the time at which they were written, he would have seen reason to omit a few passages, and to add many qualifications and explanations.

He would not probably have been inclined to retract the censures, just, though severe, which he has passed on the ignorance, the presumption, and the pedantry, of the National Assembly. But he would have admitted that, in spite of those faults, perhaps even by reason of those faults, that Assembly had conferred inestimable benefits on mankind. It is clear that, among the French of that day, political knowledge was absolutely in its infancy. It would indeed have been strange if it had attained maturity in the time of censors, of *lettres-de-cachet*, and of beds of justice. The electors did not know how to elect. The representatives did not know how to deliberate. M. Dumont taught the constituent body of Montreuil how to perform their functions, and

Digitized by Google

found them apt to learn. He afterwards tried, in concert with Mirabeau, to instruct the National Assembly in that admirable system of Parliamentary tactics which has been long established in the English House of Commons, and which has made the House of Commons, in spite of all the defects in its composition, the best and fairest debating society in the world. But these accomplished legislators, though quite as ignorant as the mob of Montreuil, proved much less docile, and cried out that they did not want to go to school to the English. Their debates consisted of endless successions of trashy pamphlets, all beginning with something about the original compact of society, man in the hunting state, and other such foolery. They sometimes diversified and enlivened these long readings by a little rioting. They bawled; they hooted; they shook their fists. They kept no order among themselves. They were insulted with impunity by the crowd which filled their galleries. They gave long and solemn considerations to trifles. They hurried through the most important resolutions with fearful expedition. They wasted months in quibbling about the words of that false and childish Declaration of Rights on which they professed to found their new constitution, and which was at irreconcilable variance with every clause of that constitution. They annihilated in a single night privileges, many of which partook of the nature of property, and ought therefore to have been most delicately handled.

They are called the Constituent Assembly. Never was a name less appropriate. They were not constituent, but the very reverse of constituent. They constituted nothing that stood or that deserved to last. They had not, and they could not possibly have, the information or the habits of mind which are necessary

Digitized by Google

for the framing of that most exquisite of all machines — a government. The metaphysical cant with which they prefaced their constitution has long been the scoff of all parties. Their constitution itself, — that constitution which they described as absolutely perfect, and to which they predicted immortality, — disappeared in a few months, and left no trace behind it. They were great only in the work of destruction.

The glory of the National Assembly is this, that they were in truth, what Mr. Burke called them in austere irony, the ablest architects of ruin that ever the world saw. They were utterly incompetent to perform any work which required a discriminating eye and a skilful hand. But the work which was then to be done was a work of devastation. They had to deal with abuses so horrible and so deeply rooted that the highest political wisdom could scarcely have produced greater good to mankind than was produced by their fierce and senseless temerity. Demolition is undoubtedly a vulgar task; the highest glory of the statesman is to construct. But there is a time for every thing, — a time to set up, and a time to pull down. The talents of revolutionary leaders and those of the legislator have equally their use and their season. It is the natural, the almost universal, law, that the age of insurrections, and proscriptions shall precede the age of good government, of temperate liberty, and liberal order.

And how should it be otherwise? It is not in swaddling-bands that we learn to walk. It is not in the dark that we learn to distinguish colours. It is not under oppression that we learn how to use freedom. The ordinary sophism by which misrule is defended is, when truly stated, this: — The people must continue

Digitized by Google

in slavery, because slavery has generated in them all the vices of slaves. Because they are ignorant, they must remain under a power which has made and which keeps them ignorant. Because they have been made ferocious by misgovernment, they must be misgoverned for ever. If the system under which they live were so mild and liberal that under its operation they had become humane and enlightened, it would be safe to venture on a change. But, as this system has destroyed morality, and prevented the development of the intellect, — as it has turned men, who might under different training have formed a virtuous and happy community, into savage and stupid wild beasts, — therefore it ought to last for ever. The English Revolution, it is said, was truly a glorious Revolution. Practical evils were redressed; no excesses were committed; no sweeping confiscations took place; the authority of the laws was scarcely for a moment suspended; the fullest and freest discussion was tolerated in Parliament; the nation showed, by the calm and temperate manner in which it asserted its liberty, that it was fit to enjoy liberty. The French Revolution was, on the other hand, the most horrible event recorded in history, — all madness and wickedness, — absurdity in theory, and atrocity in practice. What folly and injustice in the revolutionary laws! What grotesque affectation in the revolutionary ceremonies! What fanaticism! What licentiousness! What cruelty! Anacharsis Clootz and Marat, — feasts of the Supreme Being, and marriages of the Loire — trees of liberty, and heads dancing on pikes — the whole forms a kind of infernal farce, made up of every thing ridiculous, and every thing frightful. This it is to give freedom to those who have neither wisdom nor virtue.

Digitized by Google

It is not only by bad men interested in the defence of abuses that arguments like these have been urged against all schemes of political improvement. Some of the highest and purest of human beings conceived such scorn and aversion for the follies and crimes of the French Revolution that they recanted, in the moment of triumph, those liberal opinions to which they had clung in defiance of persecution. And, if we inquire why it was that they began to doubt whether liberty were a blessing, we shall find that it was only because events had proved, in the clearest manner, that liberty is the parent of virtue and of order. They ceased to abhor tyranny merely because it had been signally shown that the effect of tyranny on the hearts and understandings of men is more demoralising and more stupifying than had ever been imagined by the most zealous friend of moral rights. The truth is, that a stronger argument against the old monarchy of France may be drawn from the *noyades* and the *fusillades* than from the Bastile and the *Parc-aux-cerfs*. We believe it to be a rule without an exception, that the violence of a revolution corresponds to the degree of misgovernment which has produced that revolution. Why was the French Revolution so bloody and destructive? Why was our revolution of 1641 comparatively mild? Why was our revolution of 1688 milder still? Why was the American Revolution, considered as an internal movement, the mildest of all? There is an obvious and complete solution of the problem. The English under James the First and Charles the First were less oppressed than the French under Louis the Fifteenth and Louis the Sixteenth. The English were less oppressed after the Restoration than before the great Rebellion. And America under George the Third was less oppressed than England under the Stuarts. The

Digitized by Google

re-action was exactly proportioned to the pressure, — the vengeance to the provocation.

When Mr. Burke was reminded in his later years of the zeal which he had displayed in the cause of the Americans, he vindicated himself from the charge of inconsistency, by contrasting the wisdom and moderation of the Colonial insurgents of 1776 with the fanaticism and wickedness of the Jacobins of 1792. He was in fact bringing an argument *a fortiori* against himself. The circumstances on which he rested his vindication fully proved that the old government of France stood in far more need of a complete change than the old government of America. The difference between Washington and Robespierre, — the difference between Franklin and Barère, — the difference between the destruction of a few barrels of tea and the confiscation of thousands of square miles, — the difference between the tarring and feathering of a tax-gatherer and the massacres of September, — measure the difference between the government of America under the rule of England and the government of France under the rule of the Bourbons.

Louis the Sixteenth made great voluntary concessions to his people; and they sent him to the scaffold. Charles the Tenth violated the fundamental laws of the state, established a despotism, and butchered his subjects for not submitting quietly to that despotism. He failed in his wicked attempt. He was at the mercy of those whom he had injured. The pavements of Paris were still heaped up in barricades; — the hospitals were still full of the wounded; — the dead were still unburied; — a thousand families were in mourning; — a hundred thousand citizens were in arms. The crime was recent; — the life of the criminal was in the hands

Digitized by Google

of the sufferers; — and they touched not one hair of his head. In the first revolution, victims were sent to death by scores for the most trifling acts proved by the lowest testimony, before the most partial tribunals. After the second revolution, those ministers who had signed the ordinances, — those ministers, whose guilt, as it was of the foulest kind, was proved by the clearest evidence, — were punished only with imprisonment. In the first revolution, property was attacked. In the second, it was held sacred. Both revolutions, it is true, left the public mind of France in an unsettled state. Both revolutions were followed by insurrectionary movements. But, after the first revolution, the insurgents were almost always stronger than the law; and, since the second revolution, the law has invariably been found stronger than the insurgents. There is, indeed, much in the present state of France which may well excite the uneasiness of those who desire to see her free, happy, powerful, and secure. Yet, if we compare the present state of France with the state in which she was forty years ago, how vast a change for the better has taken place! How little effect, for example, during the first revolution, would the sentence of a judicial body have produced on an armed and victorious body! If, after the 10th of August, or after the proscription of the Gironde, or after the 9th of Thermidor, or after the carnage of Vendèmiaire, or after the arrests of Fructidor, any tribunal had decided against the conquerors in favour of the conquered, with what contempt, with what derision, would its award have been received! The judges would have lost their heads, or would have been sent to die in some unwholesome colony. The fate of the victim whom they had endeavoured to save would only have been made darker and more hopeless

Digitized by Google

by their interference. We have lately seen a signal proof that, in France, the law is now stronger than the sword. We have seen a government, in the very moment of triumph and revenge, submitting itself to the authority of a court of law. A just and independent sentence has been pronounced — a sentence worthy of the ancient renown of that magistracy to which belong the noblest recollections of French history — which, in an age of persecutors, produced L'Hôpital, — which, in an age of courtiers, produced D'Aguesseau — which, in an age of wickedness and madness, exhibited to mankind a pattern of every virtue in the life and in the death of Malesherbes. The respectful manner in which that sentence has been received is alone sufficient to show how widely the French of this generation differ from their fathers. And how is the difference to be explained? The race, the soil, the climate are the same. If those dull, honest Englishmen, who explain the events of 1793 and 1794 by saying that the French are naturally frivolous and cruel, were in the right, why is the guillotine now standing idle? Not surely for want of Carlists, of aristocrats, of people guilty of incivism, of people suspected of being suspicious characters. Is not the true explanation this, that the Frenchman of 1832 has been far better governed than the Frenchman of 1798, — that his soul has never been galled by the oppressive privileges of a separate caste, — that he has been in some degree accustomed to discuss political questions, and to perform political functions, — that he has lived for seventeen or eighteen years under institutions which, however defective, have yet been far superior to any institutions that had before existed in France?

As the second French Revolution has been far milder

Digitized by Google

than the first, so that great change which has just been effected in England has been milder even than the second French Revolution, — milder than any revolution recorded in history. Some orators have described the reform of the House of Commons as a revolution. Others have denied the propriety of the term. The question, though in seeming merely a question of definition, suggests much curious and interesting matter for reflection. If we look at the magnitude of the reform, it may well be called a revolution. If we look at the means by which it has been effected, it is merely an act of Parliament, regularly brought in, read, committed, and passed. In the whole history of England, there is no prouder circumstance than this, — that a change, which could not, in any other age, or in any other country, have been effected without physical violence, should here have been effected by the force of reason, and under the forms of law. The work of three civil wars has been accomplished by three sessions of Parliament. An ancient and deeply rooted system of abuses has been fiercely attacked and stubbornly defended. It has fallen; and not one sword has been drawn; not one estate has been confiscated; not one family has been forced to emigrate. The bank has kept its credit. The funds have kept their price. Every man has gone forth to his work and to his labour till the evening. During the fiercest excitement of the contest, — during the first fortnight of that immortal May, — there was not one moment at which any sanguinary act committed on the person of any of the most unpopular men in England would not have filled the country with horror and indignation.

And, now that the victory is won, has it been abused? An immense mass of power has been trans-

Digitized by Google

ferred from an oligarchy to the nation. Are the members of the vanquished oligarchy insecure? Does the nation seem disposed to play the tyrant? Are not those who, in any other state of society, would have been visited with the severest vengeance of the triumphant party, — would have been pining in dungeons, or flying to foreign countries, — still enjoying their possessions and their honours, still taking part as freely as ever in public affairs? Two years ago they were dominant. They are now vanquished. Yet the whole people would regard with horror any man who should dare to propose any vindictive measure. So common is this feeling, — so much is it a matter of course among us, — that many of our readers will scarcely understand what we see to admire in it.

To what are we to attribute the unparalleled moderation and humanity which the English people have displayed at this great conjuncture? The answer is plain. This moderation, this humanity, are the fruits of a hundred and fifty years of liberty. During many generations we have had legislative assemblies which, however defective their constitution might be, have always contained many members chosen by the people, and many others eager to obtain the approbation of the people; — assemblies in which perfect freedom of debate was allowed; — assemblies in which the smallest minority had a fair hearing; — assemblies in which abuses, even when they were not redressed, were at least exposed. For many generations we have had the trial by jury, the Habeas Corpus Act, the freedom of the press, the right of meeting to discuss public affairs, the right of petitioning the legislature. A vast portion of the population has long been accustomed to the exercise of political functions, and has been thoroughly

Digitized by Google

seasoned to political excitement. In most other countries there is no middle course between absolute submission and open rebellion. In England there has always been for centuries a constitutional opposition. Thus our institutions had been so good that they had educated us into a capacity for better institutions. There is not a large town in the kingdom which does not contain better materials for a legislature than all France could furnish in 1789. There is not a spouting-club at any pot-house in London in which the rules of debate are not better understood, and more strictly observed than in the Constituent Assembly. There is scarcely a Political Union which could not frame in half an hour a declaration of rights superior to that which occupied the collective wisdom of France for several months.

It would be impossible even to glance at all the causes of the French Revolution, within the limits to which we must confine ourselves. One thing is clear. The government, the aristocracy, and the church, were rewarded after their works. They reaped that which they had sown. They found the nation such as they had made it. That the people had become possessed of irresistible power before they had attained the slightest knowledge of the art of government — that practical questions of vast moment were left to be solved by men to whom politics had been only matter of theory — that a legislature was composed of persons who were scarcely fit to compose a debating society — that the whole nation was ready to lend an ear to any flatterer who appealed to its cupidity, to its fears, or to its thirst for vengeance — all this was the effect of misrule, obstinately continued in defiance of solemn warnings, and of the visible signs of an approaching retribution.

Digitized by Google

Even while the monarchy seemed to be in its highest and most palmy state, the causes of that great destruction had already begun to operate. They may be distinctly traced even under the reign of Louis the Fourteenth. That reign is the time to which the Ultra-Royalists refer as the Golden Age of France. It was in truth one of those periods which shine with an unnatural and delusive splendour, and which are rapidly followed by gloom and decay.

Concerning Louis the Fourteenth himself, the world seems at last to have formed a correct judgment. He was not a great general; he was not a great statesman; but he was, in one sense of the words, a great king. Never was there so consummate a master of what our James the First would have called king-craft, — of all those arts which most advantageously display the merits of a prince, and most completely hide his defects. Though his internal administration was bad, — though the military triumphs which gave splendour to the early part of his reign, were not achieved by himself, — though his later years were crowded with defeats and humiliations, — though he was so ignorant that he scarcely understood the Latin of his mass-book, — though he fell under the control of a cunning Jesuit, and of a more cunning old woman, — he succeeded in passing himself off on his people as a being above humanity. And this is the more extraordinary, because he did not seclude himself from the public gaze like those Oriental despots, whose faces are never seen, and whose very names it is a crime to pronounce lightly. It has been said that no man is a hero to his valet; — and all the world saw as much of Louis the Fourteenth as his valet could see. Five hundred people assembled to see him shave and put on his breeches in the morn-

Digitized by Google

ing. He then kneeled down at the side of his bed, and said his prayer, while the whole assembly awaited the end in solemn silence, — the ecclesiastics on their knees, and the laymen with their hats before their faces. He walked about his gardens with a train of two hundred courtiers at his heels. All Versailles came to see him dine and sup. He was put to bed at night in the midst of a crowd as great as that which had met to see him rise in the morning. He took his very emetics in state, and vomited majestically in the presence of all the *grandes* and *petites entrées*. Yet, though he constantly exposed himself to the public gaze in situations in which it is scarcely possible for any man to preserve much personal dignity, he to the last impressed those who surrounded him with the deepest awe and reverence. The illusion which he produced on his worshippers can be compared only to those illusions to which lovers are proverbially subject during the season of courtship. It was an illusion which affected even the senses. The contemporaries of Louis thought him tall. Voltaire, who might have seen him, and who had lived with some of the most distinguished members of his court, speaks repeatedly of his majestic stature. Yet it is as certain as any fact can be, that he was rather below than above the middle size. He had, it seems, a way of holding himself, a way of walking, a way of swelling his chest and rearing his head, which deceived the eyes of the multitude. Eighty years after his death, the royal cemetery was violated by the revolutionists; his coffin was opened; his body was dragged out; and it appeared that the prince, whose majestic figure had been so long and loudly extolled, was in truth a little man.[1] That fine

[1] Even M. de Chateaubriand, to whom we should have thought all the

Digitized by Google

expression of Juvenal is singularly applicable, both in its literal and in its metaphorical sense, to Louis the Fourteenth:

"Mors sola fatetur
Quantula sint hominum corpuscula."

His person and his government have had the same fate. He had the art of making both appear grand and august, in spite of the clearest evidence that both were below the ordinary standard. Death and time have exposed both the deceptions. The body of the great king has been measured more justly than it was measured by the courtiers who were afraid to look above his shoe-tie. His public character has been scrutinized by men free from the hopes and fears of Boileau and Molière. In the grave, the most majestic of princes is only five feet eight. In history, the hero and the politician dwindles into a vain and feeble tyrant, — the slave of priests and women, — little in war, — little in government, — little in every thing but the art of simulating greatness.

He left to his infant successor a famished and miserable people, a beaten and humbled army, provinces turned into deserts by misgovernment and persecution, factions dividing the court, a schism raging in the church, an immense debt, an empty treasury, immeasurable palaces, an innumerable household, inestimable jewels and furniture. All the sap and nutriment of the state seemed to have been drawn to feed one bloated and unwholesome excrescence. The nation was withered. The court was morbidly flourishing.

Bourbons would have seemed at least six feet high, admits this fact. "C'est une erreur," says he in his strange memoirs of the Duke of Berri, "de croire que Louis XIV. étoit d'une haute stature. Une cuirasse qui nous reste de lui, et les exhumations de St. Denys, n'ont laissé sur ce point aucun doute."

Digitized by Google

Yet it does not appear that the associations which attached the people to the monarchy had lost strength during his reign. He had neglected or sacrificed their dearest interests; but he had struck their imaginations. The very things which ought to have made him most unpopular, — the prodigies of luxury and magnificence with which his person was surrounded, while, beyond the inclosure of his parks, nothing was to be seen but starvation and despair, — seemed to increase the respectful attachment which his subjects felt for him. That governments exist only for the good of the people, appears to be the most obvious and simple of all truths. Yet history proves that it is one of the most recondite. We can scarcely wonder that it should be so seldom present to the minds of rulers, when we see how slowly, and through how much suffering, nations arrive at the knowledge of it.

There was indeed one Frenchman who had discovered those principles which it now seems impossible to miss, — that the many are not made for the use of one, — that the truly good government is not that which concentrates magnificence in a court, but that which diffuses happiness among a people, — that a king who gains victory after victory, and adds province to province, may deserve, not the admiration, but the abhorrence and contempt of mankind. These were the doctrines which Fénélon taught. Considered as an epic poem, Telemachus can scarcely be placed above Glover's Leonidas or Wilkie's Epigoniad. Considered as a treatise on politics and morals, it abounds with errors of detail; and the truths which it inculcates seem trite to a modern reader. But, if we compare the spirit in which it is written with the spirit which pervades the rest of the French literature

Digitized by Google

of that age, we shall perceive that, though in appearance trite, it was in truth one of the most original works that have ever appeared. · The fundamental principles of Fénélon's political morality, the tests by which he judged of institutions and of men, were absolutely new to his countrymen. He had taught them indeed, with the happiest effect, to his royal pupil. But how incomprehensible they were to most people, we learn from Saint Simon. That amusing writer tells us, as a thing almost incredible, that the Duke of Burgundy declared it to be his opinion that kings existed for the good of the people, and not the people for the good of kings. Saint Simon is delighted with the benevolence of this saying; but startled by its novelty, and terrified by its boldness. Indeed he distinctly says that it was not safe to repeat the sentiment in the court of Louis. Saint Simon was, of all the members of that court, the least courtly. He was as nearly an oppositionist as any man of his time. His disposition was proud, bitter, and cynical. In religion he was a Jansenist; in politics, a less hearty royalist than most of his neighbours. His opinions and his temper had preserved him from the illusions which the demeanour of Louis produced on others. He neither loved nor respected the king. Yet even this man, — one of the most liberal men in France, — was struck dumb with astonishment at hearing the fundamental axiom of all government propounded, — an axiom which, in our time, nobody in England or France would dispute, — which the stoutest Tory takes for granted as much as the fiercest Radical, and concerning which the Carlist would agree with the most republican deputy of the "extreme left." No person will do justice to Fénélon, who does not

Digitized by Google

constantly keep in mind that Telemachus was written in an age and nation in which bold and independent thinkers stared to hear that twenty millions of human beings did not exist for the gratification of one. That work is commonly considered as a school-book, very fit for children, because its style is easy and its morality blameless, but unworthy of the attention of statesmen and philosophers. We can distinguish in it, if we are not greatly mistaken, the first faint dawn of a long and splendid day of intellectual light, — the dim promise of a great deliverance, — the undeveloped germ of the charter and of the code.

What mighty interests were staked on the life of the Duke of Burgundy! and how different an aspect might the history of France have borne if he had attained the age of his grandfather or of his son; — if he had been permitted to show how much could be done for humanity by the highest virtue in the highest fortune! There is scarcely anything in history more remarkable than the descriptions which remain to us of that extraordinary man. The fierce and impetuous temper which he showed in early youth, — the complete change which a judicious education produced in his character, — his fervid piety, — his large benevolence, — the strictness with which he judged himself, — the liberality with which he judged others, — the fortitude with which alone, in the whole court, he stood up against the commands of Louis, when a religious scruple was concerned, — the charity with which alone, in the whole court, he defended the profligate Orleans against calumniators, — his great projects for the good of the people, — his activity in business, — his taste for letters, — his strong domestic attachments, — even the ungraceful person and the shy and awkward manner which concealed

Digitized by Google

from the eyes of the sneering courtiers of his grandfather so many rare endowments, — make his character the most interesting that is to be found in the annals of his house. He had resolved, if he came to the throne, to disperse that ostentatious court, which was supported at an expense ruinous to the nation, — to preserve peace, — to correct the abuses which were found in every part of the system of revenue, — to abolish or modify oppressive privileges, — to reform the administration of justice, — to revive the institution of the States General. If he had ruled over France during forty or fifty years, that great movement of the human mind, which no government could have arrested, which bad government only rendered more violent, would, we are inclined to think, have been conducted, by peaceable means, to a happy termination.

Disease and sorrow removed from the world that wisdom and virtue of which it was not worthy. During two generations France was ruled by men who, with all the vices of Louis the Fourteenth, had none of the art by which that magnificent prince passed off his vices for virtues. The people had now to see tyranny naked. That foul Duessa was stripped of her gorgeous ornaments. She had always been hideous; but a strange enchantment had made her seem fair and glorious in the eyes of her willing slaves. The spell was now broken; the deformity was made manifest; and the lovers, lately so happy and so proud, turned away loathing and horror-struck.

First came the Regency. The strictness, with which Louis had, towards the close of his life, exacted from those around him an outward attention to religious duties, produced an effect similar to that which the rigour of the Puritans had produced in England. It

Digitized by Google

was the boast of Madame de Maintenon, in the time of her greatness, that devotion had become the fashion. A fashion indeed it was; and, like a fashion, it passed away. The austerity of the tyrant's old age had injured the morality of the higher orders more than even the licentiousness of his youth. Not only had he not reformed their vices, but, by forcing them to be hypocrites, he had shaken their belief in virtue. They had found it so easy to perform the grimace of piety, that it was natural for them to consider all piety as grimace. The times were changed. Pensions, regiments, and abbeys, were no longer to be obtained by regular confession and severe penance; and the obsequious courtiers, who had kept Lent like monks of La Trappe, and who had turned up the whites of their eyes at the edifying parts of sermons preached before the king, aspired to the title of *roué* as ardently as they had aspired to that of *dévot;* and went, during Passion Week, to the revels of the Palais Royal as readily as they had formerly repaired to the sermons of Massillon.

The Regent was in many respects the fac-simile of our Charles the Second. Like Charles, he was a good-natured man, utterly destitute of sensibility. Like Charles, he had good natural talents, which a deplorable indolence rendered useless to the state. Like Charles, he thought all men corrupt and interested, and yet did not dislike them for being so. His opinion of human nature was Gulliver's; but he did not regard human nature with Gulliver's horror. He thought that he and his fellow-creatures were Yahoos; and he thought a Yahoo a very agreeable kind of animal. No princes were ever more social than Charles and Philip of Orleans; yet no princes ever had less capacity for

Digitized by Google

friendship. The tempers of these clever cynics were so easy, and their minds so languid, that habit supplied in them the place of affection, and made them the tools of people for whom they cared not one straw. In love, both were mere sensualists without delicacy or tenderness. In politics, both were utterly careless of faith and of national honour. Charles shut up the Exchequer. Philip patronised the System. The councils of Charles were swayed by the gold of Barillon; the councils of Philip by the gold of Walpole. Charles for private objects made war on Holland, the natural ally of England. Philip for private objects made war on the Spanish branch of the house of Bourbon, the natural ally, indeed the creature, of France. Even in trifling circumstances the parallel might be carried on. Both these princes were fond of experimental philosophy, and passed in the laboratory much time which would have been more advantageously passed at the council-table. Both were more strongly attached to their female relatives than to any other human being; and in both cases it was suspected that this attachment was not perfectly innocent. In personal courage, and in all the virtues which are connected with personal courage, the Regent was indisputably superior to Charles. Indeed Charles but narrowly escaped the stain of cowardice. Philip was eminently brave, and, like most brave men, was generally open and sincere. Charles added dissimulation to his other vices.

The administration of the Regent was scarcely less pernicious, and infinitely more scandalous, than that of the deceased monarch. It was by magnificent public works, and by wars conducted on a gigantic scale, that Louis had brought distress on his people. The Regent aggravated that distress by frauds of which a lame

Digitized by Google

duck on the stock-exchange would have been ashamed. France, even while suffering under the most severe calamities, had reverenced the conqueror. She despised the swindler.

When Orleans and the wretched Dubois had disappeared, the power passed to the Duke of Bourbon; a prince degraded in the public eye by the imfamously lucrative part which he had taken in the juggles of the System, and by the humility with which he bore the caprices of a loose and imperious woman. It seemed to be decreed that every branch of the royal family should successively incur the abhorrence and contempt of the nation.

Between the fall of the Duke of Bourbon and the death of Fleury, a few years of frugal and moderate government intervened. Then recommenced the downward progress of the monarchy. Profligacy in the court, extravagance in the finances, schism in the church, faction in the Parliaments, unjust war terminated by ignominious peace, — all that indicates and all that produces the ruin of great empires, make up the history of that miserable period. Abroad, the French were beaten and humbled every where, by land and by sea, on the Elbe and on the Rhine, in Asia and in America. At home, they were turned over from vizier to vizier, and from sultana to sultana, till they had reached that point beneath which there was no lower abyss of infamy, — till the yoke of Maupeou had made them pine for Choiseul, — till Madame du Barri had taught them to regret Madame de Pompadour.

But, unpopular as the monarchy had become, the aristocracy was more unpopular still; — and not without reason. The tyranny of an individual is far more

Digitized by Google

supportable than the tyranny of a caste. The old privileges were galling and hateful to the new wealth and the new knowledge. Every thing indicated the approach of no common revolution, — of a revolution destined to change, not merely the form of government, but the distribution of property and the whole social system, — of a revolution the effects of which were to be felt at every fireside in France, — of a new Jaquerie, in which the victory was to remain with *Jaques bonhomme*. In the van of the movement were the moneyed men and the men of letters, — the wounded pride of wealth and the wounded pride of intellect. An immense multitude, made ignorant and cruel by oppression, was raging in the rear.

We greatly doubt whether any course which could have been pursued by Louis the Sixteenth could have averted a great convulsion. But we are sure that, if there was such a course, it was the course recommended by M. Turgot. The church and the aristocracy, with that blindness to danger, that incapacity of believing that anything can be except what has been, which the long possession of power seldom fails to generate, mocked at the counsel which might have saved them. They would not have reform; and they had revolution. They would not pay a small contribution in place of the odious corvées; and they lived to see their castles demolished, and their lands sold to strangers. They would not endure Turgot; and they were forced to endure Robespierre.

Then the rulers of France, as if smitten with judicial blindness, plunged headlong into the American war. They thus committed at once two great errors. They encouraged the spirit of revolution. They augmented

Digitized by Google

at the same time those public burdens, the pressure of which is generally the immediate cause of revolutions. The event of the war carried to the height the enthusiasm of speculative democrats. The financial difficulties produced by the war carried to the height the discontent of that larger body of people who cared little about theories and much about taxes.

The meeting of the States-General was the signal for the explosion of all the hoarded passions of a century. In that assembly, there were undoubtedly very able men. But they had no practical knowledge of the art of government. All the great English revolutions have been conducted by practical statesmen. The French Revolution was conducted by mere speculators. Our constitution has never been so far behind the age as to have become an object of aversion to the people. The English revolutions have therefore been undertaken for the purpose of defending, correcting, and restoring, — never for the mere purpose of destroying. Our countrymen have always, even in times of the greatest excitement, spoken reverently of the form of government under which they lived, and attacked only what they regarded as its corruptions. In the very act of innovating they have constantly appealed to ancient prescription; they have seldom looked abroad for models; they have seldom troubled themselves with Utopian theories; they have not been anxious to prove that liberty is a natural right of men; they have been content to regard it as the lawful birthright of Englishmen. Their social contract is no fiction. It is still extant on the original parchment, sealed with wax which was affixed at Runnymede, and attested by the lordly names of the Marischals and Fitzherberts. No general arguments about the original equality of men, no fine

Digitized by Google

stories out of Plutarch and Cornelius Nepos, have ever affected them so much as their own familiar words, — Magna Charta, — Habeas Corpus, — Trial by Jury, — Bill of Rights. This part of our national character has undoubtedly its disadvantages. An Englishman too often reasons on politics in the spirit rather of a lawyer than of a philosopher. There is too often something narrow, something exclusive, something Jewish, if we may use the word, in his love of freedom. He is disposed to consider popular rights as the special heritage of the chosen race to which he belongs. He is inclined rather to repel than to encourage the alien proselyte who aspires to a share of his privileges. Very different was the spirit of the Constituent Assembly. They had none of our narrowness; but they had none of our practical skill in the management of affairs. They did not understand how to regulate the order of their own debates; and they thought themselves able to legislate for the whole world. All the past was loathsome to them. All their agreeable associations were connected with the future. Hopes were to them all that recollections are to us. In the institutions of their country they found nothing to love or to admire. As far back as they could look, they saw only the tyranny of one class and the degradation of another, — Frank and Gaul, knight and villein, gentleman and *roturier*. They hated the monarchy, the church, the nobility. They cared nothing for the States or the Parliament. It was long the fashion to ascribe all the follies which they committed to the writings of the philosophers. We believe that it was misrule, and nothing but misrule, that put the sting into those writings. It is not true that the French abandoned experience for theories. They took up with theories because

Digitized by Google

they had no experience of good government. It was because they had no charter that they ranted about the original contract. As soon as tolerable institutions were given to them, they began to look to those institutions. In 1830 their rallying cry was *Vive la Charte.* In 1789 they had nothing but theories round which to rally. They had seen social distinctions only in a bad form; and it was therefore natural that they should be deluded by sophisms about the equality of men. They had experienced so much evil from the sovereignty of kings that they might be excused for lending a ready ear to those who preached, in an exaggerated form, the doctrine of the sovereignty of the people.

The English, content with their own national recollections and names, have never sought for models in the institutions of Greece or Rome. The French, having nothing in their own history to which they could look back with pleasure, had recourse to the history of the great ancient commonwealths: they drew their notions of those commonwealths, not from contemporary writers, but from romances written by pedantic moralists long after the extinction of public liberty. They neglected Thucydides for Plutarch. Blind themselves, they took blind guides. They had no experience of freedom; and they took their opinions concerning it from men who had no more experience of it than themselves, and whose imaginations, inflamed by mystery and privation, exaggerated the unknown enjoyment; — from men who raved about patriotism without having ever had a country, and eulogised tyrannicide while crouching before tyrants. The maxim which the French legislators learned in this school was, that political liberty is an end, and not a means; that it is not merely valuable as the great safe-guard of order, of property,

Digitized by Google

and of morality, but that it is in itself a high and exquisite happiness to which order, property, and morality ought without one scruple to be sacrificed. The lessons which may be learned from ancient history are indeed most useful and important; but they were not likely to be learned by men who, in all their rhapsodies about the Athenian democracy, seemed utterly to forget that in that democracy there were ten slaves to one citizen; and who constantly decorated their invectives against the aristocrats with panegyrics on Brutus and Cato, — two aristocrats, fiercer, prouder, and more exclusive, than any that emigrated with the Count of Artois.

We have never met with so vivid and interesting a picture of the National Assembly as that which M. Dumont has set before us. His Mirabeau, in particular, is incomparable. All the former Mirabeaus were daubs in comparison. Some were merely painted from the imagination — others were gross caricatures: this is the very individual, neither god nor demon, but a man — a Frenchman, — a Frenchman of the eighteenth century, with great talents, with strong passions, depraved by bad education, surrounded by temptations of every kind, — made desperate at one time by disgrace, and then again intoxicated by fame. All his opposite and seemingly inconsistent qualities are in this representation so blended together as to make up a harmonious and natural whole. Till now, Mirabeau was to us, and, we believe, to most readers of history, not a man, but a string of antitheses. Henceforth he will be a real human being, a remarkable and eccentric being indeed, but perfectly conceivable.

He was fond, M. Dumont tells us, of giving odd compound nicknames. Thus, M. de Lafayette was

Digitized by Google

Grandison-Cromwell; the king of Prussia was Alaric-Cottin; D'Espremenil was Crispin-Catiline. We think that Mirabeau himself might be described, after his own fashion, as a Wilkes-Chatham. He had Wilkes's sensuality, Wilkes's levity, Wilkes's insensibility to shame. Like Wilkes, he had brought on himself the censure even of men of pleasure by the peculiar grossness of his immorality, and by the obscenity of his writings. Like Wilkes, he was heedless, not only of the laws of morality, but of the laws of honour. Yet he affected, like Wilkes, to unite the character of the demagogue to that of the fine gentleman. Like Wilkes, he conciliated, by his good humour and his high spirits, the regard of many who despised his character. Like Wilkes, he was hideously ugly; like Wilkes, he made a jest of his own ugliness; and, like Wilkes, he was, in spite of his ugliness, very attentive to his dress, and very successful in affairs of gallantry.

Resembling Wilkes in the lower and grosser parts of his character, he had, in his higher qualities, some affinity to Chatham. His eloquence, as far as we can judge of it, bore no inconsiderable resemblance to that of the great English minister. He was not eminently successful in long set speeches. He was not, on the other hand, a close and ready debater. Sudden bursts, which seemed to be the effect of inspiration — short sentences which came like lightning, dazzling, burning, striking down every thing before them — sentences which, spoken at critical moments, decided the fate of great questions — sentences which at once became proverbs — sentences which everybody still knows by heart — in these chiefly lay the oratorical power both of Chatham and of Mirabeau. There have been far greater speakers, and far greater statesmen, than either

Digitized by Google

of them; but we doubt whether any men have, in modern times, exercised such vast personal influence over stormy and divided assemblies. The power of both was as much moral as intellectual. In true dignity of character, in private and public virtue, it may seem absurd to institute any comparison between them; but they had the same haughtiness and vehemence of temper. In their language and manner there was a disdainful self-confidence, an imperiousness, a fierceness of passion, before which all common minds quailed. Even Murray and Charles Townshend, though intellectually not inferior to Chatham, were always cowed by him. Barnave, in the same manner, though the best debater in the National Assembly, flinched before the energy of Mirabeau. Men, except in bad novels, are not all good or all evil. It can scarcely be denied that the virtue of Lord Chatham was a little theatrical. On the other hand there was in Mirabeau, not indeed any thing deserving the name of virtue, but that imperfect substitute for virtue which is found in almost all superior minds, — a sensibility to the beautiful and the good, which sometimes amounted to sincere enthusiasm; and which, mingled with the desire of admiration, sometimes gave to his character a lustre resembling the lustre of true goodness, — as the "faded splendour wan" which lingered round the fallen archangel resembled the exceeding brightness of those spirits who had kept their first estate.

There are several other admirable portraits of eminent men in these Memoirs. That of Sieyes in particular, and that of Talleyrand, are masterpieces, full of life and expression. But nothing in the book has interested us more than the view which M. Dumont has presented to us, unostentatiously, and, we

Digitized by Google

may say, unconsciously, of his own character. The sturdy rectitude, the large charity, the good-nature, the modesty, the independent spirit, the ardent philanthropy, the unaffected indifference to money and to fame, make up a character which, while it has nothing unnatural, seems to us to approach nearer to perfection than any of the Grandisons and Allworthys of fiction. The work is not indeed precisely such a work as we had anticipated — it is more lively, more picturesque, more amusing than we had promised ourselves; and it is, on the other hand, less profound and philosophic. But, if it is not, in all respects, such as might have been expected from the intellect of M. Dumont, it is assuredly such as might have been expected from his heart.

Digitized by Google

WAR OF THE SUCCESSION IN SPAIN.[1]

(*Edinburgh Review*, January, 1833.)

THE days when Miscellanies in Prose and Verse by a Person of Honour, and Romances of M. Scuderi, done into English by a Person of Quality, were attractive to readers and profitable to booksellers, have long gone by. The literary privileges once enjoyed by lords are as obsolete as their right to kill the King's deer on their way to Parliament, or as their old remedy of *scandalum magnatum*. Yet we must acknowledge that, though our political opinions are by no means aristocratical, we always feel kindly disposed towards noble authors. Industry and a taste for intellectual pleasures are peculiarly respectable in those who can afford to be idle and who have every temptation to be dissipated. It is impossible not to wish success to a man who, finding himself placed, without any exertion or any merit on his part, above the mass of society, voluntarily descends from his eminence in search of distinctions which he may justly call his own.

This is, we think, the second appearance of Lord Mahon in the character of an author. His first book was creditable to him, but was in every respect inferior to the work which now lies before us. He has

[1] *History of the War of the Succession in Spain.* By LORD MAHON. 8vo. London: 1832.

Digitized by Google

undoubtedly some of the most valuable qualities of a historian, great diligence in examining authorities, great judgment in weighing testimony, and great impartiality in estimating characters. We are not aware that he has in any instance forgotten the duties belonging to his literary functions in the feelings of a kinsman. He does no more than justice to his ancestor Stanhope; he does full justice to Stanhope's enemies and rivals. His narrative is very perspicuous, and is also entitled to the praise, seldom, we grieve to say, deserved by modern writers, of being very concise. It must be admitted, however, that, with many of the best qualities of a literary veteran, he has some of the faults of a literary novice. He has not yet acquired a great command of words. His style is seldom easy, and is now and then unpleasantly stiff. He is so bigoted a purist that he transforms the Abbé d'Estrées into an Abbot. We do not like to see French words introduced into English composition; but, after all, the first law of writing, that law to which all other laws are subordinate, is this, that the words employed shall be such as convey to the reader the meaning of the writer. Now an Abbot is the head of a religious house; an Abbé is quite a different sort of person. It is better undoubtedly to use an English word than a French word; but it is better to use a French word than to misuse an English word.

Lord Mahon is also a little too fond of uttering moral reflections in a style too sententious and oracular. We will give one instance: "Strange as it seems, experience shows that we usually feel far more animosity against those whom we have injured than against those who injure us: and this remark holds good with every degree of intellect, with every class of fortune,

Digitized by Google

with a prince or a peasant, a stripling or an elder, a hero or a prince." This remark might have seemed strange at the court of Nimrod or Chedorlaomer; but it has now been for many generations considered as a truism rather than a paradox. Every boy has written on the thesis "*Odisse quem læseris.*" Scarcely any lines in English Poetry are better known than that vigorous couplet,

> "Forgiveness to the injured does belong;
> But they ne'er pardon who have done the wrong."

The historians and philosophers have quite done with this maxim, and have abandoned it, like other maxims which have lost their gloss, to bad novelists, by whom it will very soon be worn to rags.

It is no more than justice to say that the faults of Lord Mahon's book are precisely the faults which time seldom fails to cure, and that the book, in spite of those faults, is a valuable addition to our historical literature.

Whoever wishes to be well acquainted with the morbid anatomy of governments, whoever wishes to know how great states may be made feeble and wretched, should study the history of Spain. The empire of Philip the Second was undoubtedly one of the most powerful and splendid that ever existed in the world. In Europe, he ruled Spain, Portugal, the Netherlands on both sides of the Rhine, Franche Comté, Roussillon, the Milanese, and the Two Sicilies. Tuscany, Parma, and the other small states of Italy, were as completely dependent on him as the Nizam and the Rajah of Berar now are on the East India Company. In Asia, the King of Spain was master of the Philippines and of all those rich settlements which the Portuguese had made on the coasts of Malabar and Coromandel, in the

Digitized by Google

Peninsula of Malacca, and in the spice-islands of the Eastern Archipelago. In America, his dominions extended on each side of the equator into the temperate zone. There is reason to believe that his annual revenue amounted, in the season of his greatest power, to a sum near ten times as large as that which England yielded to Elizabeth. He had a standing army of fifty thousand excellent troops, at a time when England had not a single battalion in constant pay. His ordinary naval force consisted of a hundred and forty galleys. He held, what no other prince in modern times has held, the dominion both of the land and of the sea. During the greater part of his reign, he was supreme on both elements. His soldiers marched up to the capital of France; his ships menaced the shores of England.

It is no exaggeration to say that, during several years, his power over Europe was greater than even that of Napoleon. The influence of the French conqueror never extended beyond low-water mark. The narrowest strait was to his power what it was of old believed that a running stream was to the sorceries of a witch. While his army entered every metropolis from Moscow to Lisbon, the English fleets blockaded every port from Dantzic to Trieste. Sicily, Sardinia, Majorca, Guernsey, enjoyed security through the whole course of a war which endangered every throne on the Continent. The victorious and imperial nation which had filled its museums with the spoils of Antwerp, of Florence, and of Rome, was suffering painfully from the want of luxuries which use had made necessaries. While pillars and arches were rising to commemorate the French conquests, the conquerors were trying to manufacture coffee out of succory and sugar out of beet-root. The influence of Philip on the Continent

Digitized by Google

was as great as that of Napoleon. The Emperor of Germany was his kinsman. France, torn by religious dissensions, was never a formidable opponent, and was sometimes a dependent ally. At the same time, Spain had what Napoleon desired in vain, ships, colonies, and commerce. She long monopolised the trade of America and of the Indian Ocean. All the gold of the West, and all the spices of the East, were received and distributed by her. During many years of war, her commerce was interrupted only by the predatory enterprises of a few roving privateers. Even after the defeat of the Armada, English statesmen continued to look with great dread on the maritime power of Philip. "The King of Spain," said the Lord Keeper to the two Houses in 1593, "since he hath usurped upon the kingdom of Portugal, hath thereby grown mighty by gaining the East Indies: so as, how great soever he was before, he is now thereby manifestly more great: . . . . He keepeth a navy armed to impeach all trade of merchandise from England to Gascoigne and Guienne, which he attempted to do this last vintage; so as he is now become as a frontier enemy to all the west of England, as well as all the south parts, as Sussex, Hampshire, and the Isle of Wight. Yea, by means of his interest in St. Maloes, a port full of shipping for the war, he is a dangerous neighbour to the Queen's isles of Jersey and Guernsey, ancient possessions of this crown, and never conquered in the greatest wars with France."

The ascendency which Spain then had in Europe was, in one sense, well deserved. It was an ascendency which had been gained by unquestioned superiority in all the arts of policy and of war. In the sixteenth century, Italy was not more decidedly the

Digitized by Google

land of the fine arts, Germany was not more decidedly the land of bold theological speculation, than Spain was the land of statesmen and of soldiers. The character which Virgil has ascribed to his countrymen might have been claimed by the grave and haughty chiefs, who surrounded the throne of Ferdinand the Catholic, and of his immediate successors. That majestic art, "regere imperio populos," was not better understood by the Romans in the proudest days of their republic, than by Gonsalvo and Ximenes, Cortez and Alva. The skill of the Spanish diplomatists was renowned throughout Europe. In England the name of Gondomar is still remembered. The sovereign nation was unrivalled both in regular and irregular warfare. The impetuous chivalry of France, the serried phalanx of Switzerland, were alike found wanting when brought face to face with the Spanish infantry. In the wars of the New World, where something different from ordinary strategy was required in the general and something different from ordinary discipline in the soldier, where it was every day necessary to meet by some new expedient the varying tactics of a barbarous enemy, the Spanish adventurers, sprung from the common people, displayed a fertility of resource, and a talent for negotiation and command, to which history scarcely affords a parallel.

The Castilian of those times was to the Italian what the Roman, in the days of the greatness of Rome, was to the Greek. The conqueror had less ingenuity, less taste, less delicacy of perception than the conquered; but far more pride, firmness, and courage, a more solemn demeanour, a stronger sense of honour. The subject had more subtlety in speculation, the ruler more energy in action. The vices of the former were those of a

Digitized by Google

coward; the vices of the latter were those of a tyrant. It may be added, that the Spaniard, like the Roman, did not disdain to study the arts and the language of those whom he oppressed. A revolution took place in the literature of Spain, not unlike that revolution which, as Horace tells us, took place in the poetry of Latium: "Capta ferum victorem cepit." The slave took prisoner the enslaver. The old Castilian ballads gave place to sonnets in the style of Petrarch, and to heroic poems in the stanza of Ariosto, as the national songs of Rome were driven out by imitations of Theocritus, and translations from Menander.

In no modern society, not even in England during the reign of Elizabeth, has there been so great a number of men eminent at once in literature and in the pursuits of active life, as Spain produced during the sixteenth century. Almost every distinguished writer was also distinguished as a soldier and a politician. Boscan bore arms with high reputation. Garcilaso de Vega, the author of the sweetest and most graceful pastoral poem of modern times, after a short but splendid military career, fell sword in hand at the head of a storming party. Alonzo de Ercilla bore a conspicuous part in that war of Arauco, which he afterwards celebrated in one of the best heroic poems that Spain has produced. Hurtado de Mendoza, whose poems have been compared to those of Horace, and whose charming little novel is evidently the model of Gil Blas, has been handed down to us by history as one of the sternest of those iron pro-consuls who were employed by the House of Austria to crush the lingering public spirit of Italy. Lope sailed in the Armada; Cervantes was wounded at Lepanto.

It is curious to consider with how much awe our an-

Digitized by Google

cestors in those times regarded a Spaniard. He was, in their apprehension, a kind of dæmon, horribly malevolent, but withal most sagacious and powerful. "They be verye wyse and politicke," says an honest Englishman, in a memorial addressed to Mary, "and can, thorowe ther wysdome, reform and brydell theyr owne natures for a tyme, and applye their conditions to the maners of those men with whom they meddell gladlye by friendshippe; whose mischievous maners a man shall never knowe untyll he come under ther subjection: but then shall he parfectlye parceyve and fele them: which thynge I praye God England never do: for in dissimulations untyll they have ther purposes, and afterwards in oppression and tyrannye, when they can obtayne them, they do exceed all other nations upon the earthe." This is just such language as Arminius would have used about the Romans, or as an Indian statesman of our times might use about the English. It is the language of a man burning with hatred, but cowed by those whom he hates; and painfully sensible of their superiority, not only in power, but in intelligence.

But how art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! How art thou cut down to the ground, that didst weaken the nations! If we overleap a hundred years, and look at Spain towards the close of the seventeenth century, what a change do we find! The contrast is as great as that which the Rome of Gallienus and Honorius presents to the Rome of Marius and Cæsar. Foreign conquest had begun to eat into every part of that gigantic monarchy on which the sun never set. Holland was gone, and Portugal, and Artois, and Roussillon, and Franche Comté. In the East, the empire founded by the Dutch far sur-

Digitized by Google

passed in wealth and splendour that which their old tyrants still retained. In the West, England had seized, and still held, settlements in the midst of the Mexican sea.

The mere loss of territory was, however, of little moment. The reluctant obedience of distant provinces generally costs more than it is worth. Empires which branch out widely are often more flourishing for a little timely pruning. Adrian acted judiciously when he abandoned the conquests of Trajan; and England was never so rich, so great, so formidable to foreign princes, so absolutely mistress of the sea, as since the loss of her American colonies. The Spanish empire was still, in outward appearance, great and magnificent. The European dominions subject to the last feeble Prince of the House of Austria were far more extensive than those of Lewis the Fourteenth. The American dependencies of the Castilian crown still extended far to the North of Cancer and far to the South of Capricorn. But within this immense body there was an incurable decay, an utter want of tone, an utter prostration of strength. An ingenious and diligent population, eminently skilled in arts and manufactures, had been driven into exile by stupid and remorseless bigots. The glory of the Spanish pencil had departed with Velasquez and Murillo. The splendid age of Spanish literature had closed with Solis and Calderon. During the seventeenth century many states had formed great military establishments. But the Spanish army, so formidable under the command of Alva and Farnese, had dwindled away to a few thousand men, ill paid and ill disciplined. England, Holland, and France had great navies. But the Spanish navy was scarcely equal to the tenth part of that mighty force which, in

Digitized by Google

the time of Philip the Second, had been the terror of the Atlantic and the Mediterranean. The arsenals were deserted. The magazines were unprovided. The frontier fortresses were ungarrisoned. The police was utterly inefficient for the protection of the people. Murders were committed in the face of day with perfect impunity. Bravoes and discarded serving-men, with swords at their sides, swaggered every day through the most public streets and squares of the capital, disturbing the public peace, and setting at defiance the ministers of justice. The finances were in frightful disorder. The people paid much. The government received little. The American viceroys and the farmers of the revenue became rich, while the merchants broke, while the peasantry starved, while the body-servants of the sovereign remained unpaid, while the soldiers of the royal guard repaired daily to the doors of convents, and battled there with the crowd of beggars for a porringer of broth and a morsel of bread. Every remedy which was tried aggravated the disease. The currency was altered; and this frantic measure produced its never-failing effects. It destroyed all credit, and increased the misery which it was intended to relieve. The American gold, to use the words of Ortiz, was to the necessities of the state but as a drop of water to the lips of a man raging with thirst. Heaps of unopened despatches accumulated in the offices, while the Ministers were concerting with bedchamber-women and Jesuits the means of tripping up each other. Every foreign power could plunder and insult with impunity the heir of Charles the Fifth. Into such a state had the mighty kingdom of Spain fallen, while one of its smallest dependencies, a country not so large as the province of Estremadura or Andalusia, situated under

Digitized by Google

an inclement sky, and preserved only by artificial means from the inroads of the ocean, had become a power of the first class, and treated on terms of equality with the courts of London and Versailles.

The manner in which Lord Mahon explains the financial situation of Spain by no means satisfies us. "It will be found," says he, "that those individuals deriving their chief income from mines, whose yearly produce is uncertain and varying, and seems rather to spring from fortune than to follow industry, are usually careless, unthrifty, and irregular in their expenditure. The example of Spain might tempt us to apply the same remark to states." Lord Mahon would find it difficult, we suspect, to make out his analogy. Nothing could be more uncertain and varying than the gains and losses of those who were in the habit of putting into the state lotteries. But no part of the public income was more certain than that which was derived from the lotteries. We believe that this case is very similar to that of the American mines. Some veins of ore exceeded expectation; some fell below it. Some of the private speculators drew blanks, and others gained prizes. But the revenue of the state depended, not on any particular vein, but on the whole annual produce of two great continents. This annual produce seems to have been almost constantly on the increase during the seventeenth century. The Mexican mines were, through the reigns of Philip the Fourth and Charles the Second, in a steady course of improvement; and in South America, though the district of Potosi was not so productive as formerly, other places more than made up for the deficiency. We very much doubt whether Lord Mahon can prove that the income which the Spanish government derived from the mines

Digitized by Google

of America fluctuated more than the income derived from the internal taxes of Spain itself.

All the causes of the decay of Spain resolve themselves into one cause, bad government. The valour, the intelligence, the energy which, at the close of the fifteenth and the beginning of the sixteenth century, had made the Spaniards the first nation in the world, were the fruits of the old institutions of Castile and Arragon, institutions eminently favourable to public liberty. Those institutions the first Princes of the House of Austria attacked and almost wholly destroyed. Their successors expiated the crime. The effects of a change from good government to bad government is not fully felt for some time after the change has taken place. The talents and the virtues which a good constitution generates may for a time survive that constitution. Thus the reigns of princes who have established absolute monarchy on the ruins of popular forms of government often shine in history with a peculiar brilliancy. But when a generation or two has passed away, then comes signally to pass that which was written by Montesquieu, that despotic governments resemble those savages who cut down the tree in order to get at the fruit. During the first years of tyranny, is reaped the harvest sown during the last years of liberty. Thus the Augustan age was rich in great minds formed in the generation of Cicero and Cæsar. The fruits of the policy of Augustus were reserved for posterity. Philip the Second was the heir of the Cortez and of the Justiza Mayor; and they left him a nation which seemed able to conquer all the world. What Philip left to his successors is well known.

The shock which the great religious schism of the sixteenth century gave to Europe, was scarcely felt

Digitized by Google

in Spain. In England, Germany, Holland, France, Denmark, Switzerland, Sweden, that shock had produced, with some temporary evil, much durable good. The principles of the Reformation had triumphed in some of those countries. The Catholic Church had maintained its ascendency in others. But though the event had not been the same in all, all had been agitated by the conflict. Even in France, in Southern Germany, and in the Catholic cantons of Switzerland, the public mind had been stirred to its inmost depths. The hold of ancient prejudice had been somewhat loosened. The Church of Rome, warned by the danger which she had narrowly escaped, had, in those parts of her dominion, assumed a milder and more liberal character. She sometimes condescended to submit her high pretensions to the scrutiny of reason, and availed herself more sparingly than in former times of the aid of the secular arm. Even when persecution was employed, it was not persecution in the worst and most frightful shape. The severities of Lewis the Fourteenth, odious as they were, cannot be compared with those which, at the first dawn of the Reformation, had been inflicted on the heretics in many parts of Europe.

The only effect which the Reformation had produced in Spain had been to make the Inquisition more vigilant and the commonalty more bigoted. The times of refreshing came to all neighbouring countries. One people alone remained, like the fleece of the Hebrew warrior, dry in the midst of that benignant and fertilising dew. While other nations were putting away childish things, the Spaniard still thought as a child and understood as a child. Among the men of the seventeenth century, he was the man of the fifteenth

Digitized by Google

century or of a still darker period, delighted to behold an *Auto da fe*, and ready to volunteer on a Crusade.

The evils produced by a bad government and a bad religion, seemed to have attained their greatest height during the last years of the seventeenth century. While the kingdom was in this deplorable state, the King, Charles, second of the name, was hastening to an early grave. His days had been few and evil. He had been unfortunate in all his wars, in every part of his internal administration, and in all his domestic relations. His first wife, whom he tenderly loved, died very young. His second wife exercised great influence over him, but seems to have been regarded by him rather with fear than with love. He was childless; and his constitution was so completely shattered that, at little more than thirty years of age, he had given up all hopes of posterity. His mind was even more distempered than his body. He was sometimes sunk in listless melancholy, and sometimes harassed by the wildest and most extravagant fancies. He was not, however, wholly destitute of the feelings which became his station. His sufferings were aggravated by the thought that his own dissolution might not improbably be followed by the dissolution of his empire.

Several princes laid claim to the succession. The King's eldest sister had married Lewis the Fourteenth. The Dauphin would, therefore, in the common course of inheritance, have succeeded to the crown. But the Infanta had, at the time of her espousals, solemnly renounced, in her own name, and in that of her posterity, all claim to the succession. This renunciation had been confirmed in due form by the Cortes. A younger sister of the King had been the first wife of

Digitized by Google

Leopold, Emperor of Germany. She too had at her marriage renounced her claims to the Spanish crown; but the Cortes had not sanctioned the renunciation, and it was therefore considered as invalid by the Spanish jurists. The fruit of this marriage was a daughter, who had espoused the Elector of Bavaria. The Electoral Prince of Bavaria inherited her claim to the throne of Spain. The Emperor Leopold was son of a daughter of Philip the Third, and was therefore first cousin to Charles. No renunciation whatever had been exacted from his mother at the time of her marriage.

The question was certainly very complicated. That claim which, according to the ordinary rules of inheritance, was the strongest, had been barred by a contract executed in the most binding form. The claim of the Electoral Prince of Bavaria was weaker. But so also was the contract which bound him not to prosecute his claim. The only party against whom no instrument of renunciation could be produced was the party who, in respect of blood, had the weakest claim of all.

As it was clear that great alarm would be excited throughout Europe if either the Emperor or the Dauphin should become King of Spain, each of those Princes offered to waive his pretensions in favour of his second son; the Emperor, in favour of the Archduke Charles, the Dauphin, in favour of Philip Duke of Anjou.

Soon after the peace of Ryswick, William the Third and Lewis the Fourteenth determined to settle the question of the succession without consulting either Charles or the Emperor. France, England, and Holland, became parties to a treaty by which it was stip-

Digitized by Google

ulated that the Electoral Prince of Bavaria should succeed to Spain, the Indies, and the Netherlands. The Imperial family were to be bought off with the Milanese; and the Dauphin was to have the Two Sicilies.

The great object of the King of Spain and of all his counsellors was to avert the dismemberment of the monarchy. In the hope of attaining this end, Charles determined to name a successor. A will was accordingly framed by which the crown was bequeathed to the Bavarian Prince. Unhappily, this will had scarcely been signed when the Prince died. The question was again unsettled, and presented greater difficulties than before.

A new Treaty of Partition was concluded between France, England, and Holland. It was agreed that Spain, the Indies, and the Netherlands, should descend to the Archduke Charles. In return for this great concession made by the Bourbons to a rival house, it was agreed that France should have the Milanese, or an equivalent in a more commodious situation. The equivalent in view was the province of Lorraine.

Arbuthnot, some years later, ridiculed the Partition Treaty with exquisite humour and ingenuity. Everybody must remember his description of the paroxysm of rage into which poor old Lord Strutt fell, on hearing that his runaway servant Nick Frog, his clothier John Bull, and his old enemy Lewis Baboon, had come with quadrants, poles, and inkhorns, to survey his estate, and to draw his will for him. Lord Mahon speaks of the arrangement with grave severity. He calls it, "an iniquitous compact, concluded without the slightest reference to the welfare of the states so readily parcelled and allotted; insulting to the pride of Spain,

Digitized by Google

and tending to strip that country of its hard-won conquests." The most serious part of this charge would apply to half the treaties which have been concluded in Europe quite as strongly as to the Partition Treaty. What regard was shown in the treaty of the Pyrenees to the welfare of the people of Dunkirk and Roussillon, in the treaty of Nimeguen to the welfare of the people of Franche Comtè, in the treaty of Utrecht to the welfare of the people of Flanders, in the treaty of 1735 to the welfare of the people of Tuscany? All Europe remembers, and our latest posterity will, we fear, have reason to remember how coolly, at the last great pacification of Christendom, the people of Poland, of Norway, of Belgium, and of Lombardy, were allotted to masters whom they abhorred. The statesmen who negotiated the Partition Treaty were not so far beyond their age and ours in wisdom and virtue as to trouble themselves much about the happiness of the people whom they were apportioning among foreign rulers. But it will be difficult to prove that the stipulations which Lord Mahon condemns were in any respect unfavourable to the happiness of those who were to be transferred to new sovereigns. The Neapolitans would certainly have lost nothing by being given to the Dauphin, or to the Great Turk. Addison, who visited Naples about the time at which the Partition Treaty was signed, has left us a frightful description of the misgovernment under which that part of the Spanish Empire groaned. As to the people of Lorraine, an union with France would have been the happiest event which could have befallen them. Lewis was already their sovereign for all purposes of cruelty and exaction. He had kept their country during many years in his own hands. At the peace of Ryswick, indeed, their

Digitized by Google

Duke had been allowed to return. But the conditions which had been imposed on him made him a mere vassal of France.

We cannot admit that the Treaty of Partition was objectionable because it "tended to strip Spain of hard-won conquests." The inheritance was so vast, and the claimants so mighty, that without some dismemberment it was scarcely possible to make a peaceable arrangement. If any dismemberment was to take place, the best way of effecting it surely was to separate from the monarchy those provinces which were at a great distance from Spain, which were not Spanish in manners, in language, or in feelings, which were both worse governed and less valuable than the old kingdoms of Castile and Arragon, and which, having always been governed by foreigners, would not be likely to feel acutely the humiliation of being turned over from one master to another.

That England and Holland had a right to interfere is plain. The question of the Spanish succession was not an internal question, but an European question. And this Lord Mahon admits. He thinks that when the evil had been done, and a French Prince was reigning at the Escurial, England and Holland were justified in attempting, not merely to strip Spain of its remote dependencies, but to conquer Spain itself; that they were justified in attempting to put, not merely the passive Flemings and Italians, but the reluctant Castilians and Asturians, under the dominion of a stranger. The danger against which the Partition Treaty was intended to guard was precisely the same danger which afterwards was made the ground of war. It will be difficult to prove that a danger which was sufficient to justify the war was insufficient

Digitized by Google

to justify the provisions of the treaty. If, as Lord Mahon contends, it was better that Spain should be subjugated by main force than that she should be governed by a Bourbon, it was surely better that she should be deprived of Sicily and the Milanese than that she should be governed by a Bourbon.

Whether the treaty was judiciously framed is quite another question. We disapprove of the stipulations. But we disapprove of them, not because we think them bad, but because we think that there was no chance of their being executed. Lewis was the most faithless of politicians. He hated the Dutch. He hated the Government which the Revolution had established in England. He had every disposition to quarrel with his new allies. It was quite certain that he would not observe his engagements, if it should be for his interest to violate them. Even if it should be for his interest to observe them, it might well be doubted whether the strongest and clearest interest would induce a man so haughty and self-willed to coöperate heartily with two governments which had always been the objects of his scorn and aversion.

When intelligence of the second Partition Treaty arrived at Madrid, it roused to momentary energy the languishing ruler of a languishing state. The Spanish ambassador at the court of London was directed to remonstrate with the government of William; and his remonstrances were so insolent that he was commanded to leave England. Charles retaliated by dismissing the English and Dutch ambassadors. The French King, though the chief author of the Partition Treaty, succeeded in turning the whole wrath of Charles and of the Spanish people from himself, and in directing it against the two mari-

Digitized by Google

time powers. Those powers had now no agent at Madrid. Their perfidious ally was at liberty to carry on his intrigues unchecked; and he fully availed himself of this advantage.

A long contest was maintained with varying success by the factions which surrounded the miserable King. On the side of the Imperial family was the Queen, herself a Princess of that family. With her were allied the confessor of the King, and most of the ministers. On the other side were two of the most dexterous politicians of that age, Cardinal Porto Carrero, Archbishop of Toledo, and Harcourt the ambassador of Lewis.

Harcourt was a noble specimen of the French aristocracy in the days of its highest splendour, a finished gentleman, a brave soldier, and a skilful diplomatist. His courteous and insinuating manners, his Parisian vivacity tempered with Castilian gravity, made him the favourite of the whole court. He became intimate with the grandees. He caressed the clergy. He dazzled the multitude by his magnificent style of living. The prejudices which the people of Madrid conceived against the French character, the vindictive feelings generated during centuries of national rivalry, gradually yielded to his arts; while the Austrian ambassador, a surly, pompous, niggardly German, made himself and his country more and more unpopular every day.

Harcourt won over the court and the city: Porto Carrero managed the King. Never were knave and dupe better suited to each other. Charles was sick, nervous, and extravagantly superstitious. Porto Carrero had learned in the exercise of his profession the art of exciting and soothing such minds; and he

Digitized by Google

employed that art with the calm and demure cruelty which is the characteristic of wicked and ambitious priests.

He first supplanted the confessor. The state of the poor King, during the conflict between his two spiritual advisers, was horrible. At one time he was induced to believe that his malady was the same with that of the wretches described in the New Testament, who dwelt among the tombs, whom no chains could bind, and whom no man dared to approach. At another time a sorceress who lived in the mountains of the Asturias was consulted about his malady. Several persons were accused of having bewitched him. Porto Carrero recommended the appalling rite of exorcism, which was actually performed. The ceremony made the poor King more nervous and miserable than ever. But it served the turn of the Cardinal who, after much secret trickery, succeeded in casting out, not the devil, but the confessor.

The next object was to get rid of the Ministers. Madrid was supplied with provisions by a monopoly. The government looked after this most delicate concern as it looked after every thing else. The partisans of the House of Bourbon took advantage of the negligence of the administration. On a sudden the supply of food failed. Exorbitant prices were demanded. The people rose. The royal residence was surrounded by an immense multitude. The Queen harangued them. The priests exhibited the host. All was in vain. It was necessary to awaken the King from his uneasy sleep, and to carry him to the balcony. There a solemn promise was given that the unpopular advisers of the crown should be forthwith dismissed. The mob left the palace and proceeded to pull down

Digitized by Google

the houses of the ministers. The adherents of the Austrian line were thus driven from power, and the government was intrusted to the creatures of Porto Carrero. The King left the city in which he had suffered so cruel an insult for the magnificent retreat of the Escurial. Here his hypochondriac fancy took a new turn. Like his ancestor Charles the Fifth, he was haunted by a strange curiosity to pry into the secrets of that grave to which he was hastening. In the cemetery which Philip the Second had formed beneath the pavement of the church of St. Lawrence, reposed three generations of Castilian princes. Into these dark vaults the unhappy monarch descended by torch-light, and penetrated to that superb and gloomy chamber where, round the great black crucifix, were ranged the coffins of the kings and queens of Spain. There he commanded his attendants to open the massy chests of bronze in which the relics of his predecessors decayed. He looked on the ghastly spectacle with little emotion till the coffin of his first wife was unclosed, and she appeared before him — such was the skill of the embalmer — in all her well-remembered beauty. He cast one glance on those beloved features, unseen for eighteen years, those features over which corruption seemed to have no power, and rushed from the vault, exclaiming, "She is with God; and I shall soon be with her." The awful sight completed the ruin of his body and mind. The Escurial became hateful to him; and he hastened to Aranjuez. But the shades and waters of that delicious island-garden, so fondly celebrated in the sparkling verse of Calderon, brought no solace to their unfortunate master. Having tried medicine, exercise, and amusement in vain, he returned to Madrid to die.

Digitized by Google

He was now beset on every side by the bold and skilful agents of the House of Bourbon. The leading politicians of his court assured him that Lewis, and Lewis alone, was sufficiently powerful to preserve the Spanish monarchy undivided, and that Austria would be utterly unable to prevent the Treaty of Partition from being carried into effect. Some celebrated lawyers gave it as their opinion that the act of renunciation executed by the late Queen of France ought to be construed according to the spirit, and not according to the letter. The letter undoubtedly excluded the French Princes. The spirit was merely this, that ample security should be taken against the union of the French and Spanish crowns on one head.

In all probability, neither political nor legal reasonings would have sufficed to overcome the partiality which Charles felt for the House of Austria. There had always been a close connection between the two great royal lines which sprang from the marriage of Philip and Juana. Both had always regarded the French as their natural enemies. It was necessary to have recourse to religious terrors; and Porto Carrero employed those terrors with true professional skill. The King's life was drawing to a close. Would the most Catholic prince commit a great sin on the brink of the grave? And what could be a greater sin than, from an unreasonable attachment to a family name, from an unchristian antipathy to a rival house, to set aside the rightful heir of an immense monarchy? The tender conscience and the feeble intellect of Charles were strongly wrought upon by these appeals. At length Porto Carrero ventured on a master-stroke. He advised Charles to apply for counsel to the Pope. The King who, in the simplicity of his heart, consid-

Digitized by Google

ered the successor of St. Peter as an infallible guide in spiritual matters, adopted the suggestion; and Porto Carrero, who knew that his Holiness was a mere tool of France, awaited with perfect confidence the result of the application. In the answer which arrived from Rome, the King was solemnly reminded of the great account which he was soon to render, and cautioned against the flagrant injustice which he was tempted to commit. He was assured that the right was with the House of Bourbon, and reminded that his own salvation ought to be dearer to him than the House of Austria. Yet he still continued irresolute. His attachment to his family, his aversion to France, were not to be overcome even by Papal authority. At length he thought himself actually dying. Then the cardinal redoubled his efforts. Divine after divine, well tutored for the occasion, was brought to the bed of the trembling penitent. He was dying in the commission of known sin. He was defrauding his relatives. He was bequeathing civil war to his people. He yielded, and signed that memorable Testament, the cause of many calamities to Europe. As he affixed his name to the instrument, he burst into tears. "God," he said, "gives kingdoms and takes them away. I am already one of the dead."

The will was kept secret during the short remainder of his life. On the third of November 1700 he expired. All Madrid crowded to the palace. The gates were thronged. The antechamber was filled with ambassadors and grandees, eager to learn what dispositions the deceased sovereign had made. At length the folding doors were flung open. The Duke of Abrantes came forth, and announced that the whole Spanish monarchy was bequeathed to Philip Duke of Anjou.

Digitized by Google

Charles had directed that, during the interval which might elapse between his death and the arrival of his successor, the government should be administered by a council, of which Porto Carrero was the chief member.

Lewis acted, as the English ministers might have guessed that he would act. With scarcely the show of hesitation, he broke through all the obligations of the Partition Treaty, and accepted for his grandson the splendid legacy of Charles. The new sovereign hastened to take possession of his dominions. The whole court of France accompanied him to Sceaux. His brothers escorted him to that frontier which, as they weakly imagined, was to be a frontier no longer. "The Pyrenees," said Lewis, "have ceased to exist." Those very Pyrenees, a few years later, were the theatre of a war between the heir of Lewis and the prince whom France was now sending to govern Spain.

If Charles had ransacked Europe to find a successor whose moral and intellectual character resembled his own, he could not have chosen better. Philip was not so sickly as his predecessor, but he was quite as weak, as indolent, and as superstitious; he very soon became quite as hypochondriacal and eccentric; and he was even more uxorious. He was indeed a husband of ten thousand. His first object when he became King of Spain, was to procure a wife. From the day of his marriage to the day of her death, his first object was to have her near him, and to do what she wished. As soon as his wife died his first object was to procure another. Another was found as unlike the former as possible. But she was a wife; and Philip was content. Neither by day nor by night, neither in sickness nor in health, neither in time of business nor in time of relaxation, did he ever suffer her to be absent from him for

Digitized by Google

half an hour. His mind was naturally feeble; and he had received an enfeebling education. He had been brought up amidst the dull magnificence of Versailles. His grandfather was as imperious and as ostentatious in his intercourse with the royal family as in public acts. All those who grew up immediately under the eye of Lewis had the manners of persons who had never known what it was to be at ease. They were all taciturn, shy, and awkward. In all of them, except the Duke of Burgundy, the evil went further than the manners. The Dauphin, the Duke of Berri, Philip of Anjou, were men of insignificant characters. They had no energy, no force of will. They had been so little accustomed to judge or to act for themselves that implicit dependence had become necessary to their comfort. The new King of Spain, emancipated from control, resembled that wretched German captive who, when the irons which he had worn for years were knocked off, fell prostrate on the floor of his prison. The restraints which had enfeebled the mind of the young Prince were required to support it. Till he had a wife he could do nothing; and when he had a wife he did whatever she chose.

While this lounging, moping boy was on his way to Madrid, his grandfather was all activity. Lewis had no reason to fear a contest with the Empire single-handed. He made vigorous preparations to encounter Leopold. He overawed the States-General by means of a great army. He attempted to soothe the English government by fair professions. William was not deceived. He fully returned the hatred of Lewis; and, if he had been free to act according to his own inclinations, he would have declared war as soon as the contents of the will were known. But he was bound

Digitized by Google

by constitutional restraints. Both his person and his measures were unpopular in England. His secluded life and his cold manners disgusted a people accustomed to the graceful affability of Charles the Second. His foreign accent and his foreign attachments were offensive to the national prejudices. His reign had been a season of distress, following a season of rapidly increasing prosperity. The burdens of the late war and the expense of restoring the currency had been severely felt. Nine clergymen out of ten were Jacobites at heart, and had sworn allegiance to the new dynasty, only in order to save their benefices. A large proportion of the country gentlemen belonged to the same party. The whole body of agricultural proprietors was hostile to that interest which the creation of the national debt had brought into notice, and which was believed to be peculiarly favoured by the Court, the monied interest. The middle classes were fully determined to keep out James and his family. But they regarded William only as the less of two evils; and as long as there was no imminent danger of a counter-revolution, were disposed to thwart and mortify the sovereign by whom they were, nevertheless, ready to stand, in case of necessity, with their lives and fortunes. They were sullen and dissatisfied. "There was," as Somers expressed it in a remarkable letter to William, "a deadness and want of spirit in the nation universally."

Every thing in England was going on as Lewis could have wished. The leaders of the Whig party had retired from power, and were extremely unpopular on account of the unfortunate issue of the Partition Treaty. The Tories, some of whom still cast a lingering look towards St. Germain's, were in office, and had a decided majority in the House of Commons. William

Digitized by Google

was so much embarrassed by the state of parties in England that he could not venture to make war on the House of Bourbon. He was suffering under a complication of severe and incurable diseases. There was every reason to believe that a few months would dissolve the fragile tie which bound up that feeble body with that ardent and unconquerable soul. If Lewis could succeed in preserving peace for a short time, it was probable that all his vast designs would be securely accomplished. Just at this crisis, the most important crisis of his life, his pride and his passions hurried him into an error, which undid all that forty years of victory and intrigue had done, which produced the dismemberment of the kingdom of his grandson, and brought invasion, bankruptcy, and famine on his own.

James the Second died at St. Germain's. Lewis paid him a farewell visit, and was so much moved by the solemn parting, and by the grief of the exiled queen, that, losing sight of all considerations of policy, and actuated, as it should seem, merely by compassion and by a not ungenerous vanity, he acknowledged the Prince of Wales as King of England.

The indignation which the Castilians had felt when they heard that three foreign powers had undertaken to regulate the Spanish succession was nothing to the rage with which the English learned that their good neighbour had taken the trouble to provide them with a king. Whigs and Tories joined in condemning the proceedings of the French Court. The cry for war was raised by the city of London, and echoed and reechoed from every corner of the realm. William saw that his time was come. Though his wasted and suffering body could hardly move without support, his spirit was as energetic and resolute as when,

Digitized by Google

at twenty-three, he bade defiance to the combined forces of England and France. He left the Hague, where he had been engaged in negotiating with the States and the Emperor a defensive treaty against the ambitious designs of the Bourbons. He flew to London. He remodelled the ministry. He dissolved the Parliament. The majority of the new House of Commons was with the King; and the most vigorous preparations were made for war.

Before the commencement of active hostilities William was no more. But the Grand Alliance of the European Princes against the Bourbons was already constructed. "The master workman died," says Mr. Burke; "but the work was formed on true mechanical principles, and it was as truly wrought." On the fifteenth of May, 1702, war was proclaimed by concert at Vienna, at London, and at the Hague.

Thus commenced that great struggle by which Europe, from the Vistula to the Atlantic Ocean, was agitated during twelve years. The two hostile coalitions were, in respect of territory, wealth, and population, not unequally matched. On the one side were France, Spain, and Bavaria; on the other England, Holland, the Empire, and a crowd of inferior Powers.

That part of the war which Lord Mahon has undertaken to relate, though not the least important, is certainly the least attractive. In Italy, in Germany, and in the Netherlands, great means were at the disposal of great generals. Mighty battles were fought. Fortress after fortress was subdued. The iron chain of the Belgian strongholds was broken. By a regular and connected series of operations extending through several years, the French were driven back from the Danube and the Po into their own provinces. The

Digitized by Google

war in Spain, on the contrary, is made up of events which seem to have no dependence on each other. The turns of fortune resemble those which take place in a dream. Victory and defeat are not followed by their usual consequences. Armies spring out of nothing, and melt into nothing. Yet, to judicious readers of history, the Spanish conflict is perhaps more interesting than the campaigns of Marlborough and Eugene. The fate of the Milanese and of the Low Countries was decided by military skill. The fate of Spain was decided by the peculiarities of the national character.

When the war commenced, the young King was in a most deplorable situation. On his arrival at Madrid he found Porto Carrero at the head of affairs, and he did not think fit to displace the man to whom he owed his crown. The cardinal was a mere intriguer, and in no sense a statesman. He had acquired, in the Court and in the Confessional, a rare degree of skill in all the tricks by which weak minds are managed. But of the noble science of government, of the sources of national prosperity, of the causes of national decay, he knew no more than his master. It is curious to observe the contrast between the dexterity with which he ruled the conscience of a foolish valetudinarian, and the imbecility which he showed when placed at the head of an empire. On what grounds Lord Mahon represents the Cardinal as a man "of splendid genius," "of vast abilities," we are unable to discover. Lewis was of a very different opinion, and Lewis was very seldom mistaken in his judgment of character. "Every body," says he, in a letter to his ambassador, "knows how incapable the Cardinal is. He is an object of contempt to his countrymen."

A few miserable savings were made, which ruined

Digitized by Google

individuals without producing any perceptible benefit to the state. The police became more and more inefficient. The disorders of the capital were increased by the arrival of French adventurers, the refuse of Parisian brothels and gaming-houses. These wretches considered the Spaniards as a subjugated race whom the countrymen of the new sovereign might cheat and insult with impunity. The King sate eating and drinking all night, lay in bed all day, yawned at the council table, and suffered the most important papers to lie unopened for weeks. At length he was roused by the only excitement of which his sluggish nature was susceptible. His grandfather consented to let him have a wife. The choice was fortunate. Maria Louisa, Princess of Savoy, a beautiful and graceful girl of thirteen, already a woman in person and mind, at the age when the females of colder climates are still children, was the person selected. The King resolved to give her the meeting in Catalonia. He left his capital, of which he was already thoroughly tired. At setting out he was mobbed by a gang of beggars. He, however, made his way through them, and repaired to Barcelona.

Lewis was perfectly aware that the Queen would govern Philip. He, accordingly, looked about for somebody to govern the Queen. He selected the Princess Orsini to be first lady of the bedchamber, no insignificant post in the household of a very young wife, and a very uxorious husband. The princess was the daughter of a French peer, and the widow of a Spanish grandee. She was, therefore, admirably fitted by her position to be the instrument of the Court of Versailles at the Court of Madrid. The Duke of Orleans called her, in words too coarse for translation, the Lieutenant of Captain Maintenon; and the appel-

Digitized by Google

lation was well deserved. She aspired to play in Spain the part which Madame de Maintenon had played in France. But, though at least equal to her model in wit, information, and talents for intrigue, she had not that self-command, that patience, that imperturbable evenness of temper, which had raised the widow of a buffoon to be the consort of the proudest of kings. The Princess was more than fifty years old, but was still vain of her fine eyes, and her fine shape; she still dressed in the style of a girl; and she still carried her flirtations so far as to give occasion for scandal. She was, however, polite, eloquent, and not deficient in strength of mind. The bitter Saint Simon owns that no person whom she wished to attach could long resist the graces of her manners and of her conversation.

We have not time to relate how she obtained, and how she preserved her empire over the young couple in whose household she was placed, how she became so powerful, that neither minister of Spain nor ambassador from France could stand against her, how Lewis himself was compelled to court her, how she received orders from Versailles to retire, how the Queen took part with her favourite attendant, how the King took part with the Queen, and how, after much squabbling, lying, shuffling, bullying, and coaxing, the dispute was adjusted. We turn to the events of the war.

When hostilities were proclaimed at London, Vienna, and the Hague, Philip was at Naples. He had been with great difficulty prevailed upon, by the most urgent representations from Versailles, to separate himself from his wife, and to repair without her to his Italian dominions, which were then menaced by the Emperor. The Queen acted as Regent, and, child as she was, seems to

Digitized by Google

have been quite as competent to govern the kingdom as her husband or any of his ministers.

In August, 1702, an armament, under the command of the Duke of Ormond, appeared off Cadiz. The Spanish authorities had no funds and no regular troops. The national spirit, however, supplied in some degree what was wanting. The nobles and farmers advanced money. The peasantry were formed into what the Spanish writers call bands of heroic patriots, and what General Stanhope calls a "rascally foot militia." If the invaders had acted with vigour and judgment, Cadiz would probably have fallen. But the chiefs of the expedition were divided by national and professional feelings, Dutch against English, and land against sea. Sparre, the Dutch general, was sulky and perverse. Bellasys, the English general, embezzled the stores. Lord Mahon imputes the ill temper of Sparre to the influence of the republican institutions of Holland. By parity of reason, we suppose that he would impute the peculations of Bellasys to the influence of the monarchical and aristocratical institutions of England. The Duke of Ormond, who had the command of the whole expedition, proved on this occasion, as on every other, destitute of the qualities which great emergencies require. No discipline was kept; the soldiers were suffered to rob and insult those whom it was most desirable to conciliate. Churches were robbed; images were pulled down; nuns were violated. The officers shared the spoil instead of punishing the spoilers; and at last the armament, loaded, to use the words of Stanhope, "with a great deal of plunder and infamy," quitted the scene of Essex's glory, leaving the only Spaniard of note who had declared for them to be hanged by his countrymen.

Digitized by Google

The fleet was off the coast of Portugal on the way back to England, when the Duke of Ormond received intelligence that the treasure ships from America had just arrived in Europe, and had, in order to avoid his armament, repaired to the harbour of Vigo. The cargo consisted, it was said, of more than three millions sterling in gold and silver, besides much valuable merchandise. The prospect of plunder reconciled all disputes. Dutch and English, admirals and generals, were equally eager for action. The Spaniards might with the greatest ease have secured the treasure by simply landing it; but it was a fundamental law of Spanish trade that the galleons should unload at Cadiz, and at Cadiz only. The Chamber of Commerce at Cadiz, in the true spirit of monopoly, refused, even at this conjuncture, to bate one jot of its privilege. The matter was referred to the Council of the Indies. That body deliberated and hesitated just a day too long. Some feeble preparations for defence were made. Two ruined towers at the mouth of the bay of Vigo were garrisoned by a few ill-armed and untrained rustics; a boom was thrown across the entrance of the basin; and a few French ships of war, which had convoyed the galleons from America, were moored within. But all was to no purpose. The English ships broke the boom; Ormond and his soldiers scaled the forts; the French burned their ships, and escaped to the shore. The conquerors shared some millions of dollars; some millions more were sunk. When all the galleons had been captured or destroyed came an order in due form allowing them to unload.

When Philip returned to Madrid in the beginning of 1703, he found the finances more embarrassed, the people more discontented, and the hostile coalition more

Digitized by Google

formidable than ever. The loss of the galleons had occasioned a great deficiency in the revenue. The Admiral of Castile, one of the greatest subjects in Europe, had fled to Lisbon and sworn allegiance to the Archduke. The King of Portugal soon after acknowledged Charles as King of Spain, and prepared to support the title of the House of Austria by arms.

On the other side, Lewis sent to the assistance of his grandson an army of 12,000 men, commanded by the Duke of Berwick. Berwick was the son of James the Second and Arabella Churchill. He had been brought up to expect the highest honours which an English subject could enjoy; but the whole course of his life was changed by the revolution which overthrew his infatuated father. Berwick became an exile, a man without a country; and from that time forward his camp was to him in the place of a country, and professional honour was his patriotism. He ennobled his wretched calling. There was a stern, cold, Brutus-like virtue in the manner in which he discharged the duties of a soldier of fortune. His military fidelity was tried by the strongest temptations, and was found invincible. At one time he fought against his uncle; at another time he fought against the cause of his brother; yet he was never suspected of treachery, or even of slackness.

Early in 1704, an army composed of English, Dutch, and Portuguese, was assembled on the western frontier of Spain. The Archduke Charles had arrived at Lisbon, and appeared in person at the head of his troops. The military skill of Berwick held the Allies, who were commanded by Lord Galway, in check through the whole campaign. On the south, however, a great blow was struck. An English fleet, under Sir George Rooke, having on board several regiments commanded

Digitized by Google

by the Prince of Hesse Darmstadt, appeared before the rock of Gibraltar. That celebrated stronghold, which nature has made all but impregnable, and against which all the resources of the military art have been employed in vain, was taken as easily as if it had been an open village in a plain. The garrison went to say their prayers instead of standing on their guard. A few English sailors climbed the rock. The Spaniards capitulated; and the British flag was placed on those ramparts from which the combined armies and navies of France and Spain have never been able to pull it down. Rooke proceeded to Malaga, gave battle in the neighbourhood of that port to a French squadron, and after a doubtful action returned to England.

But greater events were at hand. The English government had determined to send an expedition to Spain, under the command of Charles Mordaunt Earl of Peterborough. This man was, if not the greatest, yet assuredly the most extraordinary character of that age, the King of Sweden himself not excepted. Indeed, Peterborough may be described as a polite, learned and amorous Charles the Twelfth. His courage had all the French impetuosity, and all the English steadiness. His fertility and activity of mind were almost beyond belief. They appeared in every thing that he did, in his campaigns, in his negotiations, in his familiar correspondence, in his lightest and most unstudied conversation. He was a kind friend, a generous enemy, and in deportment a thorough gentleman. But his splendid talents and virtues were rendered almost useless to his country, by his levity, his restlessness, his irritability, his morbid craving for novelty and for excitement. His weaknesses had not only brought him, on more than one occasion, into serious trouble; but had

Digitized by Google

impelled him to some actions altogether unworthy of his humane and noble nature. Repose was insupportable to him. He loved to fly round Europe faster than a travelling courier. He was at the Hague one week, at Vienna the next. Then he took a fancy to see Madrid; and he had scarcely reached Madrid, when he ordered horses and set off for Copenhagen. No attendants could keep up with his speed. No bodily infirmities could confine him. Old age, disease, imminent death, produced scarcely any effect on his intrepid spirit. Just before he underwent the most horrible of surgical operations, his conversation was as sprightly as that of a young man in the full vigour of health. On the day after the operation, in spite of the entreaties of his medical advisers, he would set out on a journey. His figure was that of a skeleton. But his elastic mind supported him under fatigues and sufferings which seemed sufficient to bring the most robust man to the grave. Change of employment was as necessary to him as change of place. He loved to dictate six or seven letters at once. Those who had to transact business with him complained that though he talked with great ability on every subject, he could never be kept to the point. "Lord Peterborough," said Pope, "would say very pretty and lively things in his letters, but they would be rather too gay and wandering; whereas, were Lord Bolingbroke to write to an emperor, or to a statesman, he would fix on that point which was the most material, would set it in the strongest and finest light, and manage it so as to make it the most serviceable to his purpose." What Peterborough was to Bolingbroke as a writer, he was to Marlborough as a general. He was, in truth, the last of the knights-errant, brave to temerity, liberal to profusion, courte-

Digitized by Google

ous in his dealings with enemies, the protector of the oppressed, the adorer of women. His virtues and vices were those of the Round Table. Indeed, his character can hardly be better summed up, than in the lines in which the author of that clever little poem, *Monks and Giants*, has described Sir Tristram.

"His birth, it seems, by Merlin's calculation,
Was under Venus, Mercury, and Mars;
His mind with all their attributes was mixed,
And, like those planets, wandering and unfixed.

"From realm to realm he ran, and never staid:
Kingdoms and crowns he won, and gave away:
It seemed as if his labours were repaid
By the mere noise and movement of the fray:
No conquests nor acquirements had he made;
His chief delight was, on some festive day
To ride triumphant, prodigal, and proud,
And shower his wealth amidst the shouting crowd.

"His schemes of war were sudden, unforeseen,
Inexplicable, both to friend and foe;
It seemed as if some momentary spleen
Inspired the project and impelled the blow;
And most his fortune and success were seen
With means the most inadequate and low;
Most master of himself, and least encumbered,
When overmatched, entangled and outnumbered."

In June, 1705, this remarkable man arrived in Lisbon with five thousand Dutch and English soldiers. There the Archduke embarked with a large train of attendants, whom Peterborough entertained munificently during the voyage at his own expense. From Lisbon the armament proceeded to Gibraltar, and, having taken the Prince of Hesse Darmstadt on board, steered towards the north-east along the coast of Spain.

The first place at which the expedition touched,

Digitized by Google

after leaving Gibraltar, was Alter, in Valencia. The wretched misgovernment of Philip had excited great discontent throughout this province. The invaders were eagerly welcomed. The peasantry flocked to the shore, bearing provisions, and shouting, "Long live Charles the Third." The neighbouring fortress of Denia surrendered without a blow.

The imagination of Peterborough took fire. He conceived the hope of finishing the war at one blow. Madrid was but a hundred and fifty miles distant. There was scarcely one fortified place on the road. The troops of Philip were either on the frontiers of Portugal or on the coast of Catalonia. At the capital there was no military force, except a few horse who formed a guard of honour round the person of Philip. But the scheme of pushing into the heart of a great kingdom with an army of only seven thousand men, was too daring to please the Archduke. The Prince of Hesse Darmstadt, who, in the reign of the late King of Spain, had been Governor of Catalonia, and who overrated his own influence in that province, was of opinion that they ought instantly to proceed thither, and to attack Barcelona. Peterborough was hampered by his instructions, and found it necessary to submit.

On the sixteenth of August the fleet arrived before Barcelona; and Peterborough found that the task assigned to him by the Archduke and the Prince was one of almost insuperable difficulty. One side of the city was protected by the sea; the other by the strong fortifications of Monjuich. The walls were so extensive that thirty thousand men would scarcely have been sufficient to invest them. The garrison was as numerous as the besieging army. The best officers in the Spanish service were in the town. The hopes

Digitized by Google

which the Prince of Darmstadt had formed of a general rising in Catalonia, were grievously disappointed. The invaders were joined only by about fifteen hundred armed peasants, whose services cost more than they were worth.

No general was ever in a more deplorable situation than that in which Peterborough was now placed. He had always objected to the scheme of besieging Barcelona. His objections had been overruled. He had to execute a project which he had constantly represented as impracticable. His camp was divided into hostile factions, and he was censured by all. The Archduke and the Prince blamed him for not proceeding instantly to take the town; but suggested no plan by which seven thousand men could be enabled to do the work of thirty thousand. Others blamed their general for giving up his own opinion to the childish whims of Charles, and for sacrificing his men in an attempt to perform what was impossible. The Dutch commander positively declared that his soldiers should not stir: Lord Peterborough might give what orders he chose; but to engage in such a siege was madness; and the men should not be sent to certain death where there was no chance of obtaining any advantage.

At length, after three weeks of inaction, Peterborough announced his fixed determination to raise the siege. The heavy cannon were sent on board. Preparations were made for reembarking the troops. Charles and the Prince of Hesse were furious; but most of the officers blamed their general for having delayed so long the measure which he had at last found it necessary to take. On the 12th of September there were rejoicings and public entertainments in Barcelona for this great deliverance. On the following morning

Digitized by Google

the English flag was flying on the ramparts of Monjuich. The genius and energy of one man had supplied the place of forty battalions.

At midnight Peterborough had called on the Prince of Hesse, with whom he had not for some time been on speaking terms. "I have resolved, sir," said the Earl, "to attempt an assault; you may accompany us if you think fit, and see whether I and my men deserve what you have been pleased to say of us." The Prince was startled. The attempt, he said, was hopeless, but he was ready to take his share; and, without further discussion, he called for his horse.

Fifteen hundred English soldiers were assembled under the Earl. A thousand more had been posted as a body of reserve at a neighbouring convent, under the command of Stanhope. After a winding march along the foot of the hills, Peterborough and his little army reached the walls of Monjuich. There they halted till daybreak. As soon as they were descried, the enemy advanced into the outer ditch to meet them. This was the event on which Peterborough had reckoned, and for which his men were prepared. The English received the fire, rushed forward, leaped into the ditch, put the Spaniards to flight, and entered the works together with the fugitives. Before the garrison had recovered from their first surprise, the Earl was master of the outworks, had taken several pieces of cannon, and had thrown up a breastwork to defend his men. He then sent off for Stanhope's reserve. While he was waiting for this reinforcement, news arrived that three thousand men were marching from Barcelona towards Monjuich. He instantly rode out to take a view of them; but no sooner had he left his troops than they were seized with a panic. Their situation

Digitized by Google

was indeed full of danger; they had been brought into Monjuich they scarcely knew how; their numbers were small; their general was gone: their hearts failed them, and they were proceeding to evacuate the fort. Peterborough received information of these occurrences in time to stop the retreat. He galloped up to the fugitives, addressed a few words to them, and put himself at their head. The sound of his voice and the sight of his face restored all their courage, and they marched back to their former position.

The Prince of Hesse had fallen in the confusion of the assault; but every thing else went well. Stanhope arrived; the detachment which had marched out of Barcelona retreated; the heavy cannon were disembarked, and brought to bear on the inner fortifications of Monjuich, which speedily fell. Peterborough, with his usual generosity, rescued the Spanish soldiers from the ferocity of his victorious army, and paid the last honours with great pomp to his rival the Prince of Hesse.

The reduction of Monjuich was the first of a series of brilliant exploits. Barcelona fell; and Peterborough had the glory of taking, with a handful of men, one of the largest and strongest towns of Europe. He had also the glory, not less dear to his chivalrous temper, of saving the life and honour of the beautiful Duchess of Popoli, whom he met flying with dishevelled hair from the fury of the soldiers. He availed himself dexterously of the jealousy with which the Catalonians regarded the inhabitants of Castile. He guaranteed to the province in the capital of which he was now quartered all its ancient rights and liberties, and thus succeeded in attaching the population to the Austrian cause.

Digitized by Google

The open country now declared in favour of Charles. Tarragona, Tortosa, Gerona, Lerida, San Mateo, threw open their gates. The Spanish government sent the Count of Las Torres with seven thousand men to reduce San Mateo. The Earl of Peterborough, with only twelve hundred men, raised the siege. His officers advised him to be content with this extraordinary success. Charles urged him to return to Barcelona; but no remonstrances could stop such a spirit in the midst of such a career. It was the depth of winter. The country was mountainous. The roads were almost impassable. The men were ill-clothed. The horses were knocked up. The retreating army was far more numerous than the pursuing army. But difficulties and dangers vanished before the energy of Peterborough. He pushed on, driving Las Torres before him. Nules surrendered to the mere terror of his name; and, on the fourth of February, 1706, he arrived in triumph at Valencia. There he learned that a body of four thousand men was on the march to join Las Torres. He set out at dead of night from Valencia, passed the Xucar, came unexpectedly on the encampment of the enemy, and slaughtered, dispersed, or took the whole reinforcement. The Valencians could scarcely believe their eyes when they saw the prisoners brought in.

In the mean time the Courts of Madrid and Versailles, exasperated and alarmed by the fall of Barcelona and by the revolt of the surrounding country, determined to make a great effort. A large army, nominally commanded by Philip, but really under the orders of Marshal Tessé, entered Catalonia. A fleet under the Count of Toulouse, one of the natural children of Lewis the Fourteenth, appeared before the port of Bar-

Digitized by Google

celona. The city was attacked at once by sea and land. The person of the Archduke was in considerable danger. Peterborough, at the head of about three thousand men, marched with great rapidity from Valencia. To give battle, with so small a force, to a great regular army under the conduct of a Marshal of France, would have been madness. The Earl therefore made war after the fashion of the Minas and Empecinados of our own time. He took his post on the neighbouring mountains, harassed the enemy with incessant alarms, cut off their stragglers, intercepted their communications with the interior, and introduced supplies, both of men and provisions into the town. He saw, however, that the only hope of the besieged was on the side of the sea. His commission from the British government gave him supreme power, not only over the army, but, whenever he should be actually on board, over the navy also. He put out to sea at night in an open boat, without communicating his design to any person. He was picked up, several leagues from the shore, by one of the ships of the English squadron. As soon as he was on board, he announced himself as first in command, and sent a pinnace with his orders to the Admiral. Had these orders been given a few hours earlier, it is probable that the whole French fleet would have been taken. As it was, the Count of Toulouse put out to sea. The port was open. The town was relieved. On the following night the enemy raised the siege and retreated to Roussillon. Peterborough returned to Valencia, a place which he preferred to every other in Spain; and Philip, who had been some weeks absent from his wife, could endure the misery of separation no longer, and flew to rejoin her at Madrid.

At Madrid, however, it was impossible for him or for

Digitized by Google

her to remain. The splendid success which Peterborough had obtained on the eastern coast of the Peninsula had inspired the sluggish Galway with emulation. He advanced into the heart of Spain. Berwick retreated. Alcantara, Ciudad Rodrigo, and Salamanca fell, and the conquerors marched towards the capital.

Philip was earnestly pressed by his advisers to remove the seat of government to Burgos. The advanced guard of the allied army was already seen on the heights above Madrid. It was known that the main body was at hand. The unfortunate Prince fled with his Queen and his household. The royal wanderers, after travelling eight days on bad roads, under a burning sun, and sleeping eight nights in miserable hovels, one of which fell down and nearly crushed them both to death, reached the Metropolis of Old Castile. In the mean time the invaders had entered Madrid in triumph, and had proclaimed the Archduke in the streets of the imperial city. Arragon, ever jealous of the Castilian ascendency, followed the example of Catalonia. Saragossa revolted without seeing an enemy. The governor whom Philip had set over Carthagena betrayed his trust, and surrendered to the Allies the best arsenal and the last ships which Spain possessed.

Toledo had been for some time the retreat of two ambitious, turbulent, and vindictive intriguers, the Queen Dowager and Cardinal Porto Carrero. They had long been deadly enemies. They had led the adverse factions of Austria and France. Each had in turn domineered over the weak and disordered mind of the late King. At length the impostures of the priest had triumphed over the blandishments of the woman; Porto Carrero had remained victorious; and the Queen had fled in shame and mortification, from the court where

Digitized by Google

she had once been supreme. In her retirement she was soon joined by him whose arts had destroyed her influence. The cardinal, having held power just long enough to convince all parties of his incompetency, had been dismissed to his See, cursing his own folly and the ingratitude of the House which he had served too well. Common interests and common enmities reconciled the fallen rivals. The Austrian troops were admitted into Toledo without opposition. The Queen Dowager flung off that mournful garb which the widow of a King of Spain wears through her whole life, and blazed forth in jewels. The Cardinal blessed the standards of the invaders in his magnificent cathedral, and lighted up his palace in honour of the great deliverance. It seemed that the struggle had terminated in favour of the Archduke, and that nothing remained for Philip but a prompt flight into the dominions of his grandfather.

So judged those who were ignorant of the character and habits of the Spanish people. There is no country in Europe which it is so easy to overrun as Spain: there is no country in Europe which it is more difficult to conquer. Nothing can be more contemptible than the regular military resistance which Spain offers to an invader; nothing more formidable than the energy which she puts forth when her regular military resistance has been beaten down. Her armies have long borne too much resemblance to mobs; but her mobs have had, in an unusual degree, the spirit of armies. The soldier, as compared with other soldiers, is deficient in military qualities; but the peasant has as much of those qualities as the soldier. In no country have such strong fortresses been taken by surprise: in no country have unfortified towns made so furious and

Digitized by Google

obstinate a resistance to great armies. War in Spain has, from the days of the Romans, had a character of its own; it is a fire which cannot be raked out; it burns fiercely under the embers; and long after it has, to all seeming, been extinguished, bursts forth more violently than ever. This was seen in the last war. Spain had no army which could have looked in the face an equal number of French or Prussian soldiers; but one day laid the Prussian monarchy in the dust; one day put the crown of France at the disposal of invaders. No Jena, no Waterloo, would have enabled Joseph to reign in quiet at Madrid.

The conduct of the Castilians throughout the War of the Succession was most characteristic. With all the odds of number and situation on their side, they had been ignominiously beaten. All the European dependencies of the Spanish crown were lost. Catalonia, Arragon, and Valencia had acknowledged the Austrian Prince. Gibraltar had been taken by a few sailors; Barcelona stormed by a few dismounted dragoons. The invaders had penetrated into the centre of the Peninsula, and were quartered at Madrid and Toledo. While these events had been in progress, the nation had scarcely given a sign of life. The rich could hardly be prevailed on to give or to lend for the support of war; the troops had shown neither discipline nor courage; and now at last, when it seemed that all was lost, when it seemed that the most sanguine must relinquish all hope, the national spirit awoke, fierce, proud, and unconquerable. The people had been sluggish when the circumstances might well have inspired hope; they reserved all their energy for what appeared to be a season of despair. Castile, Leon, Andalusia, Estremadura, rose at once; every peasant

Digitized by Google

procured a firelock or a pike; the Allies were masters only of the ground on which they trod. No soldier could wander a hundred yards from the main body of the invading army without imminent risk of being poniarded. The country through which the conquerors had passed to Madrid, and which, as they thought, they had subdued, was all in arms behind them. Their communications with Portugal were cut off. In the mean time, money began, for the first time, to flow rapidly into the treasury of the fugitive king. "The day before yesterday," says the Princess Orsini, in a letter written at this time, "the priest of a village which contains only a hundred and twenty houses brought a hundred and twenty pistoles to the Queen. 'My flock,' said he, 'are ashamed to send you so little; but they beg you to believe that in this purse there are a hundred and twenty hearts faithful even to the death.' The good man wept as he spoke; and indeed we wept too. Yesterday another small village, in which there are only twenty houses, sent us fifty pistoles."

While the Castilians were everywhere arming in the cause of Philip, the Allies were serving that cause as effectually by their mismanagement. Galway staid at Madrid, where his soldiers indulged in such boundless licentiousness that one half of them were in the hospitals. Charles remained dawdling in Catalonia. Peterborough had taken Requena, and wished to march from Valencia towards Madrid, and to effect a junction with Galway; but the Archduke refused his consent to the plan. The indignant general remained accordingly in his favourite city, on the beautiful shores of the Mediterranean, reading Don Quixote, giving balls and suppers, trying in vain to get some good

Digitized by Google

sport out of the Valencia bulls, and making love, not in vain, to the Valencian women.

At length the Archduke advanced into Castile, and ordered Peterborough to join him. But it was too late. Berwick had already compelled Galway to evacuate Madrid; and, when the whole force of the Allies was collected at Guadalaxara, it was found to be decidedly inferior in numbers to that of the enemy.

Peterborough formed a plan for regaining possession of the capital. His plan was rejected by Charles. The patience of the sensitive and vainglorious hero was worn out. He had none of that serenity of temper which enabled Marlborough to act in perfect harmony with Eugene, and to endure the vexatious interference of the Dutch deputies. He demanded permission to leave the army. Permission was readily granted; and he set out for Italy. That there might be some pretext for his departure, he was commissioned by the Archduke to raise a loan in Genoa on the credit of the revenues of Spain.

From that moment to the end of the campaign the tide of fortune ran strong against the Austrian cause. Berwick had placed his army between the Allies and the frontiers of Portugal. They retreated on Valencia, and arrived in that province, leaving about ten thousand prisoners in the hands of the enemy.

In January, 1707, Peterborough arrived at Valencia from Italy, no longer bearing a public character, but merely as a volunteer. His advice was asked, and it seems to have been most judicious. He gave it as his decided opinion that no offensive operations against Castile ought to be undertaken. It would be easy, he said, to defend Arragon, Catalonia, and Valencia, against Philip. The inhabitants of those parts of

Digitized by Google

Spain were attached to the cause of the Archduke; and the armies of the House of Bourbon would be resisted by the whole population. In a short time the enthusiasm of the Castilians might abate. The government of Philip might commit unpopular acts. Defeats in the Netherlands might compel Lewis to withdraw the succours which he had furnished to his grandson. Then would be the time to strike a decisive blow. This excellent advice was rejected. Peterborough, who had now received formal letters of recall from England, departed before the opening of the campaign; and with him departed the good fortune of the Allies. Scarcely any general had ever done so much with means so small. Scarcely any general had ever displayed equal originality and boldness. He possessed, in the highest degree, the art of conciliating those whom he had subdued. But he was not equally successful in winning the attachment of those with whom he acted. He was adored by the Catalonians and Valencians; but he was hated by the prince whom he had all but made a great king, and by the generals whose fortune and reputation were staked on the same venture with his own. The English government could not understand him. He was so eccentric that they gave him no credit for the judgment which he really possessed. One day he took towns with horse-soldiers; then again he turned some hundreds of infantry into cavalry at a minute's notice. He obtained his political intelligence chiefly by means of love affairs, and filled his despatches with epigrams. The ministers thought that it would be highly impolitic to intrust the conduct of the Spanish war to so volatile and romantic a person. They therefore gave the command to Lord Galway, an experienced veteran, a man who was in war

Digitized by Google

what Molière's doctors were in medicine, who thought it much more honourable to fail according to rule, than to succeed by innovation, and who would have been very much ashamed of himself if he had taken Monjuich by means so strange as those which Peterborough employed. This great commander conducted the campaign of 1707 in the most scientific manner. On the plain of Almanza he encountered the army of the Bourbons. He drew up his troops according to the methods prescribed by the best writers, and in a few hours lost eighteen thousand men, a hundred and twenty standards, all his baggage and all his artillery. Valencia and Arragon were instantly conquered by the French, and, at the close of the year, the mountainous province of Catalonia was the only part of Spain which still adhered to Charles.

"Do you remember, child," says the foolish woman in the Spectator to her husband, "that the pigeon-house fell the very afternoon that our careless wench spilt the salt upon the table?" "Yes, my dear," replies the gentleman, "and the next post brought us an account of the battle of Almanza." The approach of disaster in Spain had been for some time indicated by omens much clearer than the mishap of the saltcellar; an ungrateful prince, an undisciplined army, a divided council, envy triumphant over merit, a man of genius recalled, a pedant and a sluggard intrusted with supreme command. The battle of Almanza decided the fate of Spain. The loss was such as Marlborough or Eugene could scarcely have retrieved, and was certainly not to be retrieved by Stanhope and Staremberg.

Stanhope, who took the command of the English army in Catalonia, was a man of respectable abilities,

Digitized by Google

both in military and civil affairs, but fitter, we conceive, for a second than for a first place. Lord Mahon, with his usual candour, tells us, what we believe was not known before, that his ancestor's most distinguished exploit, the conquest of Minorca, was suggested by Marlborough. Staremberg, a methodical tactician of the German school, was sent by the emperor to command in Spain. Two languid campaigns followed, during which neither of the hostile armies did any thing memorable, but during which both were nearly starved.

At length, in 1710, the chiefs of the Allied forces resolved to venture on bolder measures. They began the campaign with a daring move, pushed into Arragon, defeated the troops of Philip at Almenara, defeated them again at Saragossa, and advanced to Madrid. The King was again a fugitive. The Castilians sprang to arms with the same enthusiasm which they had displayed in 1706. The conquerors found the capital a desert. The people shut themselves up in their houses, and refused to pay any mark of respect to the Austrian prince. It was necessary to hire a few children to shout before him in the streets. Meanwhile, the court of Philip at Valladolid was thronged by nobles and prelates. Thirty thousand people followed their King from Madrid to his new residence. Women of rank, rather than remain behind, performed the journey on foot. The peasants enlisted by thousands. Money, arms, and provisions, were supplied in abundance by the zeal of the people. The country round Madrid was infested by small parties of irregular horse. The Allies could not send off a despatch to Arragon, or introduce a supply of provisions into the capital. It was unsafe for the Archduke to hunt

Digitized by Google

in the immediate vicinity of the palace which he occupied.

The wish of Stanhope was to winter in Castile. But he stood alone in the council of war; and, indeed, it is not easy to understand how the Allies could have maintained themselves, through so unpropitious a season, in the midst of so hostile a population. Charles, whose personal safety was the first object of the generals, was sent with an escort of cavalry to Catalonia in November; and in December the army commenced its retreat towards Arragon.

But the Allies had to do with a master-spirit. The King of France had lately sent the Duke of Vendome to command in Spain. This man was distinguished by the filthiness of his person, by the brutality of his demeanour, by the gross buffonery of his conversation, and by the impudence with which he abandoned himself to the most nauseous of all vices. His sluggishness was almost incredible. Even when engaged in a campaign, he often passed whole days in his bed. His strange torpidity had been the cause of some of the most serious disasters which the armies of the House of Bourbon had sustained. But when he was roused by any great emergency, his resources, his energy, and his presence of mind, were such as had been found in no French general since the death of Luxembourg.

At this crisis, Vendome was all himself. He set out from Talavera with his troops, and pursued the retreating army of the Allies with a speed perhaps never equalled, in such a season, and in such a country. He marched night and day. He swam, at the head of his cavalry, the flooded stream of Henares, and, in a few days, overtook Stanhope, who was at Brihuega

Digitized by Google

with the left wing of the Allied army. "Nobody with me," says the English general, "imagined that they had any foot within some days' march of us; and our misfortune is owing to the incredible diligence which their army made." Stanhope had but just time to send off a messenger to the centre of the army, which was some leagues from Brihuega, before Vendome was upon him. The town was invested on every side. The walls were battered with cannon. A mine was sprung under one of the gates. The English kept up a terrible fire till their powder was spent. They then fought desperately with the bayonet against overwhelming odds. They burned the houses which the assailants had taken. But all was to no purpose. The British general saw that resistance could produce only a useless carnage. He concluded a capitulation; and his gallant little army became prisoners of war on honourable terms.

Scarcely had Vendome signed the capitulation, when he learned that Staremberg was marching to the relief of Stanhope. Preparations were instantly made for a general action. On the day following that on which the English had delivered up their arms, was fought the obstinate and bloody fight of Villa-Viciosa. Staremberg remained master of the field. Vendome reaped all the fruits of the battle. The Allies spiked their cannon, and retired towards Arragon. But even in Arragon they found no place of rest. Vendome was behind them. The guerrilla parties were around them. They fled to Catalonia; but Catalonia was invaded by a French army from Roussillon. At length the Austrian general, with six thousand harassed and dispirited men, the remains of a great and victorious army, took refuge in Bar-

Digitized by Google

celona, almost the only place in Spain which still recognised the authority of Charles.

Philip was now much safer at Madrid than his grandfather at Paris. All hope of conquering Spain in Spain was at an end. But in other quarters the House of Bourbon was reduced to the last extremity. The French armies had undergone a series of defeats in Germany, in Italy, and in the Netherlands. An immense force, flushed with victory, and commanded by the greatest generals of the age, was on the borders of France. Lewis had been forced to humble himself before the conquerors. He had even offered to abandon the cause of his grandson; and his offer had been rejected. But a great turn in affairs was approaching.

The English administration which had commenced the war against the House of Bourbon was an administration composed of Tories. But the war was a Whig war. It was the favourite scheme of William, the Whig King. Lewis had provoked it by recognising, as sovereign of England, a prince peculiarly hateful to the Whigs. It had placed England in a position of marked hostility to that power from which alone the Pretender could expect efficient succour. It had joined England in the closest union to a Protestant and republican state, to a state which had assisted in bringing about the Revolution, and which was willing to guarantee the execution of the Act of Settlement. Marlborough and Godolphin found that they were more zealously supported by their old opponents than by their old associates. Those ministers who were zealous for the war were gradually converted to Whiggism. The rest dropped off, and were succeeded by Whigs. Cowper became Chancellor. Sunderland, in spite of the very just antipathy of Anne, was made Secretary

Digitized by Google

of State. On the death of the Prince of Denmark a more extensive change took place. Wharton became Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, and Somers President of the Council. At length the administration was wholly in the hands of the Low Church party.

In the year 1710 a violent change took place. The Queen had always been a Tory at heart. Her religious feelings were all on the side of the Established Church. Her family feelings pleaded in favour of her exiled brother. Her selfish feelings disposed her to favour the zealots of prerogative. The affection which she felt for the Duchess of Marlborough was the great security of the Whigs. That affection had at length turned to deadly aversion. While the great party which had long swayed the destinies of Europe was undermined by bedchamber women at St. James's, a violent storm gathered in the country. A foolish parson had preached a foolish sermon against the principles of the Revolution. The wisest members of the government were for letting the man alone. But Godolphin, inflamed with all the zeal of a new-made Whig, and exasperated by a nickname which was applied to him in this unfortunate discourse, insisted that the preacher should be impeached. The exhortations of the mild and sagacious Somers were disregarded. The impeachment was brought; the doctor was convicted; and the accusers were ruined. The clergy came to the rescue of the persecuted clergyman. The country gentlemen came to the rescue of the clergy. A display of Tory feelings, such as England had not witnessed since the closing years of Charles the Second's reign, appalled the Ministers and gave boldness to the Queen. She turned out the Whigs, called Harley and St. John to power, and dissolved the Parliament. The

Digitized by Google

elections went strongly against the late government. Stanhope, who had in his absence been put in nomination for Westminster, was defeated by a Tory candidate. The new Ministers, finding themselves masters of the new Parliament, were induced by the strongest motives to conclude a peace with France. The whole system of alliance in which the country was engaged was a Whig system. The general by whom the English armies had constantly been led to victory, and for whom it was impossible to find a substitute, was now, whatever he might formerly have been, a Whig general. If Marlborough were discarded it was probable that some great disaster would follow. Yet, if he were to retain his command, every great action which he might perform would raise the credit of the party in opposition.

A peace was therefore concluded between England and the Princes of the House of Bourbon. Of that peace Lord Mahon speaks in terms of the severest reprehension. He is, indeed, an excellent Whig of the time of the first Lord Stanhope. "I cannot but pause for a moment," says he, "to observe how much the course of a century has inverted the meaning of our party nicknames, how much a modern Tory resembles a Whig of Queen Anne's reign, and a Tory of Queen Anne's reign a modern Whig."

We grant one half of Lord Mahon's proposition: from the other half we altogether dissent. We allow that a modern Tory resembles, in many things, a Whig of Queen Anne's reign. It is natural that such should be the case. The worst things of one age often resemble the best things of another. A modern shopkeeper's house is as well furnished as the house of a considerable merchant in Anne's reign. Very plain people now

Digitized by Google

wear finer cloth than Beau Fielding or Beau Edgeworth could have procured in Queen Anne's reign. We would rather trust to the apothecary of a modern village than to the physician of a large town in Anne's reign. A modern boarding-school miss could tell the most learned professor of Anne's reign some things in geography, astronomy, and chemistry, which would surprise him.

The science of government is an experimental science; and therefore it is, like all other experimental sciences, a progressive science. Lord Mahon would have been a very good Whig in the days of Harley. But Harley, whom Lord Mahon censures so severely, was very Whiggish when compared even with Clarendon; and Clarendon was quite a democrat when compared with Lord Burleigh. If Lord Mahon lives, as we hope he will, fifty years longer, we have no doubt that, as he now boasts of the resemblance which the Tories of our time bear to the Whigs of the Revolution, he will then boast of the resemblance borne by the Tories of 1882 to those immortal patriots, the Whigs of the Reform Bill.

Society, we believe, is constantly advancing in knowledge. The tail is now where the head was some generations ago. But the head and the tail still keep their distance. A nurse of this century is as wise as a justice of the quorum and cust-alorum in Shallow's time. The wooden spoon of this year would puzzle a senior wrangler of the reign of George the Second. A boy from the National School reads and spells better than half the knights of the shire in the October Club. But there is still as wide a difference as ever between justices and nurses, senior wranglers and wooden spoons, members of Parliament and children at charity

Digitized by Google

schools. In the same way, though a Tory may now be very like what a Whig was a hundred and twenty years ago, the Whig is as much in advance of the Tory as ever. The stag, in the Treatise on the Bathos, who "feared his hind feet would o'ertake the fore," was not more mistaken than Lord Mahon, if he thinks that he has really come up with the Whigs. The absolute position of the parties has been altered; the relative position remains unchanged. Through the whole of that great movement, which began before these party-names existed, and which will continue after they have become obsolete, through the whole of that great movement of which the Charter of John, the institution of the House of Commons, the extinction of Villanage, the separation from the see of Rome, the expulsion of the Stuarts, the reform of the Representative System, are successive stages, there have been, under some name or other, two sets of men, those who were before their age, and those who were behind it, those who were the wisest among their contemporaries, and those who gloried in being no wiser than their great grandfathers. It is delightful to think, that, in due time, the last of those who straggle in the rear of the great march will occupy the place now occupied by the advanced guard. The Tory Parliament of 1710 would have passed for a most liberal Parliament in the days of Elizabeth; and there are at present few members of the Conservative Club who would not have been fully qualified to sit with Halifax and Somers at the Kit-cat.

Though, therefore, we admit that a modern Tory bears some resemblance to a Whig of Queen Anne's reign, we can by no means admit that a Tory of Anne's reign resembled a modern Whig. Have the modern Whigs passed laws for the purpose of closing the

Digitized by Google

entrance of the House of Commons against the new interests created by trade? Do the modern Whigs hold the doctrine of divine right? Have the modern Whigs laboured to exclude all Dissenters from office and Power? The modern Whigs are, indeed, at the present moment, like the Tories of 1712, desirous of peace, and of close union with France. But is there no difference between the France of 1712 and the France of 1832? Is France now the stronghold of the "Popish tyranny" and the "arbitrary power" against which our ancestors fought and prayed? Lord Mahon will find, we think, that his parallel is, in all essential circumstances, as incorrect as that which Fluellen drew between Macedon and Monmouth, or as that which an ingenious Tory lately discovered between Archbishop Williams and Archbishop Vernon.

We agree with Lord Mahon in thinking highly of the Whigs of Queen Anne's reign. But that part of their conduct which he selects for especial praise is precisely the part which we think most objectionable. We revere them as the great champions of political and of intellectual liberty. It is true that, when raised to power, they were not exempt from the faults which power naturally engenders. It is true that they were men born in the seventeenth century, and that they were therefore ignorant of many truths which are familiar to the men of the nineteenth century. But they were, what the reformers of the Church were before them, and what the reformers of the House of Commons have been since, the leaders of their species in a right direction. It is true that they did not allow to political discussion that latitude which to us appears reasonable and safe; but to them we owe the removal of the Censorship. It is true that they did not carry

Digitized by Google

the principle of religious liberty to its full extent; but to them we owe the Toleration Act.

Though, however, we think that the Whigs of Anne's reign, were, as a body, far superior in wisdom and public virtue to their contemporaries the Tories, we by no means hold ourselves bound to defend all the measures of our favourite party. A life of action, if it is to be useful, must be a life of compromise. But speculation admits of no compromise. A public man is often under the necessity of consenting to measures which he dislikes, lest he should endanger the success of measures which he thinks of vital importance. But the historian lies under no such necessity. On the contrary, it is one of his most sacred duties to point out clearly the errors of those whose general conduct he admires.

It seems to us, then, that, on the great question which divided England during the last four years of Anne's reign, the Tories were in the right, and the Whigs in the wrong. That question was, whether England ought to conclude peace without exacting from Philip a resignation of the Spanish crown?

No Parliamentary struggle, from the time of the Exclusion Bill to the time of the Reform Bill, has been so violent as that which took place between the authors of the Treaty of Utrecht and the War Party. The Commons were for peace; the Lords were for vigorous hostilities. The queen was compelled to choose which of her two highest prerogatives she would exercise, whether she would create Peers or dissolve the Parliament. The ties of party superseded the ties of neighbourhood and of blood. The members of the hostile factions would scarcely speak to each other, or bow to each other. The women appeared at the theatres

Digitized by Google

bearing the badges of their political sect. The schism extended to the most remote counties of England. Talents, such as had seldom before been displayed in political controversy, were enlisted in the service of the hostile parties. On one side was Steele, gay, lively, drunk with animal spirits and with factious animosity, and Addison, with his polished satire, his inexhaustible fertility of fancy, and his graceful simplicity of style. In the front of the opposite ranks appeared a darker and fiercer spirit, the apostate politician, the ribald priest, the perjured lover, a heart burning with hatred against the whole human race, a mind richly stored with images from the dunghill and the lazar-house. The ministers triumphed, and the peace was concluded. Then came the reaction. A new sovereign ascended the throne. The Whigs enjoyed the confidence of the King and of the Parliament. The unjust severity with which the Tories had treated Marlborough and Walpole was more than retaliated. Harley and Prior were thrown into prison; Bolingbroke and Ormond were compelled to take refuge in a foreign land. The wounds inflicted in this desperate conflict continued to rankle for many years. It was long before the members of either party could discuss the question of the peace of Utrecht with calmness and impartiality. That the Whig Ministers had sold us to the Dutch; that the Tory Ministers had sold us to the French; that the war had been carried on only to fill the pockets of Marlborough; that the peace had been concluded only to facilitate the return of the Pretender; these imputations and many others, utterly unfounded, or grossly exaggerated, were hurled backward and forward by the political disputants of the last century. In our time the question may be discussed without

Digitized by Google

irritation. We will state, as concisely as possible, the reasons which have led us to the conclusion at which we have arrived.

The dangers which were to be apprehended from the peace were two; first, the danger that Philip might be induced, by feelings of private affection, to act in strict concert with the elder branch of his house, to favour the French trade at the expense of England, and to side with the French government in future wars; secondly, the danger that the posterity of the Duke of Burgundy might become extinct, that Philip might become heir by blood to the French crown, and that thus two great monarchies might be united under one sovereign.

The first danger appears to us altogether chimerical. Family affection has seldom produced much effect on the policy of princes. The state of Europe at the time of the peace of Utrecht proved that in politics the ties of interest are much stronger than those of consanguinity or affinity. The Elector of Bavaria had been driven from his dominions by his father-in-law; Victor Amadeus was in arms against his sons-in-law; Anne was seated on a throne from which she had assisted to push a most indulgent father. It is true that Philip had been accustomed from childhood to regard his grandfather with profound veneration. It was probable, therefore, that the influence of Lewis at Madrid would be very great. But Lewis was more than seventy years old; he could not live long; his heir was an infant in the cradle. There was surely no reason to think that the policy of the King of Spain would be swayed by his regard for a nephew whom he had never seen.

In fact, soon after the peace, the two branches of the

Digitized by Google

House of Bourbon began to quarrel. A close alliance was formed between Philip and Charles, lately competitors for the Castilian crown. A Spanish princess, betrothed to the King of France, was sent back in the most insulting manner to her native country; and a decree was put forth by the Court of Madrid commanding every Frenchman to leave Spain. It is true that, fifty years after the peace of Utrecht, an alliance of peculiar strictness was formed between the French and Spanish governments. But both governments were actuated on that occasion, not by domestic affection, but by common interests, and common enmities. Their compact, though called the Family Compact, was as purely a political compact as the league of Cambrai or the league of Pilnitz.

The second danger was that Philip might have succeeded to the crown of his native country. This did not happen: but it might have happened; and at one time it seemed very likely to happen. A sickly child alone stood between the King of Spain and the heritage of Lewis the Fourteenth. Philip, it is true, solemnly renounced his claim to the French crown. But the manner in which he had obtained possession of the Spanish crown had proved the inefficacy of such renunciations. The French lawyers declared Philip's renunciation null, as being inconsistent with the fundamental law of the realm. The French people would probably have sided with him whom they would have considered as the rightful heir. Saint Simon, though much less zealous for hereditary monarchy than most of his countrymen, and though strongly attached to the Regent, declared, in the presence of that prince, that he never would support the claims of the House of Orleans against those of the King of Spain. "If

Digitized by Google

such," he said, "be my feelings, what must be the feelings of others?" Bolingbroke, it is certain, was fully convinced that the renunciation was worth no more than the paper on which it was written, and demanded it only for the purpose of blinding the English Parliament and people.

Yet, though it was at one time probable that the posterity of the Duke of Burgundy would become extinct, and though it is almost certain that, if the posterity of the Duke of Burgundy had become extinct, Philip would have successfully preferred his claim to the crown of France, we still defend the principle of the Treaty of Utrecht. In the first place, Charles had, soon after the battle of Villa-Viciosa, inherited, by the death of his elder brother, all the dominions of the House of Austria. Surely, if to these dominions he had added the whole monarchy of Spain, the balance of power would have been seriously endangered. The union of the Austrian dominions and Spain would not, it is true, have been so alarming an event as the union of France and Spain. But Charles was actually Emperor. Philip was not, and never might be, King of France. The certainty of the less evil might well be set against the chance of the greater evil.

But, in fact, we do not believe that Spain would long have remained under the government either of an Emperor or of a King of France. The character of the Spanish people was a better security to the nations of Europe than any will, any instrument of renunciation, or any treaty. The same energy which the people of Castile had put forth when Madrid was occupied by the Allied armies, they would have again put forth as soon as it appeared that their country was

Digitized by Google

about to become a French province. Though they were no longer masters abroad, they were by no means disposed to see foreigners set over them at home. If Philip had attempted to govern Spain by mandates from Versailles, a second Grand Alliance would easily have effected what the first had failed to accomplish. The Spanish nation would have rallied against him as zealously as it had before rallied round him. And of this he seems to have been fully aware. For many years the favourite hope of his heart was that he might ascend the throne of his grandfather; but he seems never to have thought it possible that he could reign at once in the country of his adoption and in the country of his birth.

These were the dangers of the peace; and they seem to us to be of no very formidable kind. Against these dangers are to be set off the evils of war and the risk of failure. The evils of the war, the waste of life, the suspension of trade, the expenditure of wealth, the accumulation of debt, require no illustration. The chances of failure it is difficult at this distance of time to calculate with accuracy. But we think that an estimate approximating to the truth may, without much difficulty, be formed. The Allies had been victorious in Germany, Italy, and Flanders. It was by no means improbable that they might fight their way into the very heart of France. But at no time since the commencement of the war had their prospects been so dark in that country which was the very object of the struggle. In Spain they held only a few square leagues. The temper of the great majority of the nation was decidedly hostile to them. If they had persisted, if they had obtained success equal to their highest expectations, if they had gained a series of victories as splen-

Digitized by Google

did as those of Blenheim and Ramilies, if Paris had fallen, if Lewis had been a prisoner, we still doubt whether they would have accomplished their object. They would still have had to carry on interminable hostilities against the whole population of a country which affords peculiar facilities to irregular warfare, and in which invading armies suffer more from famine than from the sword.

We are, therefore, for the peace of Utrecht. We are indeed no admirers of the statesmen who concluded that peace. Harley, we believe, was a solemn trifler, St. John a brilliant knave. The great body of their followers consisted of the country clergy and the country gentry; two classes of men who were then inferior in intelligence to decent shopkeepers or farmers of our time. Parson Barnabas, Parson Trulliber, Sir Wilful Witwould, Sir Francis Wronghead, Squire Western, Squire Sullen, such were the people who composed the main strength of the Tory party during the sixty years which followed the Revolution. It is true that the means by which the Tories came into power in 1710 were most disreputable. It is true that the manner in which they used their power was often unjust and cruel. It is true that, in order to bring about their favourite project of peace, they resorted to slander and deception, without the slightest scruple. It is true that they passed off on the British nation a renunciation which they knew to be invalid. It is true that they gave up the Catalans to the vengeance of Philip, in a manner inconsistent with humanity and national honour. But on the great question of Peace or War, we cannot but think that, though their motives may have been selfish and malevolent, their decision was beneficial to the state.

Digitized by Google

But we have already exceeded our limits. It remains only for us to bid Lord Mahon heartily farewell, and to assure him that, whatever dislike we may feel for his political opinions, we shall always meet him with pleasure on the neutral ground of literature.

Digitized by Google

HORACE WALPOLE.[1]

(*Edinburgh Review*, October, 1833.)

We cannot transcribe this titlepage without strong feelings of regret. The editing of these volumes was the last of the useful and modest services rendered to literature by a nobleman of amiable manners, of untarnished public and private character, and of cultivated mind. On this, as on other occasions, Lord Dover performed his part diligently, judiciously, and without the slightest ostentation. He had two merits which are rarely found together in a commentator. He was content to be merely a commentator, to keep in the background, and to leave the foreground to the author whom he had undertaken to illustrate. Yet, though willing to be an attendant, he was by no means a slave; nor did he consider it as part of his duty to see no faults in the writer to whom he faithfully and assiduously rendered the humblest literary offices.

The faults of Horace Walpole's head and heart are indeed sufficiently glaring. His writings, it is true, rank as high among the delicacies of intellectual epicures as the Strasburg pies among the dishes

[1] *Letters of Horace Walpole, Earl of Orford, to Sir Horace Mann, British Envoy at the Court of Tuscany.* Now first published from the Originals in the Possession of the Earl of Waldgravl. Edited by Lord Dover. 2 vols. 8vo. London: 1833.

Digitized by Google

described in the *Almanach des Gourmands*. But as the *pâté-de-foie-gras* owes its excellence to the diseases of the wretched animal which furnishes it, and would be good for nothing if it were not made of livers preternaturally swollen, so none but an unhealthy and disorganised mind could have produced such literary luxuries as the works of Walpole.

He was, unless we have formed a very erroneous judgment of his character, the most eccentric, the most artificial, the most fastidious, the most capricious of men. His mind was a bundle of inconsistent whims and affectations. His features were covered by mask within mask. When the outer disguise of obvious affectation was removed, you were still as far as ever from seeing the real man. He played innumerable parts, and over-acted them all. When he talked misanthropy, he out-Timoned Timon. When he talked philanthropy, he left Howard at an immeasurable distance. He scoffed at courts, and kept a chronicle of their most trifling scandal; at society, and was blown about by its slightest veerings of opinion; at literary fame, and left fair copies of his private letters, with copious notes, to be published after his decease; at rank, and never for a moment forgot that he was an Honourable; at the practice of entail, and tasked the ingenuity of conveyancers to tie up his villa in the strictest settlement.

The conformation of his mind was such that whatever was little seemed to him great, and whatever was great seemed to him little. Serious business was a trifle to him, and trifles were his serious business. To chat with blue stockings, to write little copies of complimentary verses on little occasions, to superintend a private press, to preserve from natural decay

Digitized by Google

the perishable topics of Ranelagh and White's, to record divorces and bets, Miss Chudleigh's absurdities and George Selwyn's good sayings, to decorate a grotesque house with pie-crust battlements, to procure rare engravings and antique chimney-boards, to match odd gauntlets, to lay out a maze of walks within five acres of ground, these were the grave employments of his long life. From these he turned to politics as to an amusement. After the labours of the print-shop and the auction-room he unbent his mind in the House of Commons. And, having indulged in the recreation of making laws and voting millions, he returned to more important pursuits, to researches after Queen Mary's comb, Wolsey's red hat, the pipe which Van Tromp smoked during his last sea-fight, and the spur which King William struck into the flank of Sorrel.

In every thing in which Walpole busied himself, in the fine arts, in literature, in public affairs, he was drawn by some strange attraction from the great to the little, and from the useful to the odd. The politics in which he took the keenest interest, were politics scarcely deserving of the name. The growlings of George the Second, the flirtations of Princess Emily with the Duke of Grafton, the amours of Prince Frederic and Lady Middlesex, the squabbles between Gold Stick in waiting and the Master of the Buckhounds, the disagreements between the tutors of Prince George, these matters engaged almost all the attention which Walpole could spare from matters more important still, from bidding for Zinckes and Petitots, from cheapening fragments of tapestry and handles of old lances, from joining bits of painted glass, and from setting up memorials of departed cats and dogs. While he was fetching and carrying the gossip of Kensington

Digitized by Google

Palace and Carlton House, he fancied that he was engaged in politics, and when he recorded that gossip, he fancied that he was writing history.

He was, as he has himself told us, fond of faction as an amusement. He loved mischief: but he loved quiet; and he was constantly on the watch for opportunities of gratifying both his tastes at once. He sometimes contrived, without showing himself, to disturb the course of ministerial negotiations and to spread confusion through the political circles. He does not himself pretend that, on these occasions, he was actuated by public spirit; nor does he appear to have had any private advantage in view. He thought it a good practical joke to set public men together by the ears; and he enjoyed their perplexities, their accusations, and their recriminations, as a malicious boy enjoys the embarrassment of a misdirected traveller.

About politics, in the high sense of the word, he knew nothing, and cared nothing. He called himself a Whig. His father's son could scarcely assume any other name. It pleased him also to affect a foolish dislike of kings as kings, and a foolish love and admiration of rebels as rebels; and perhaps, while kings were not in danger, and while rebels were not in being, he really believed that he held the doctrines which he professed. To go no further than the letters now before us, he is perpetually boasting to his friend Mann of his aversion to royalty and to royal persons. He calls the crime of Damien "that least bad of murders, the murder of a king." He hung up in his villa an engraving of the death-warrant of Charles, with the inscription "*Major Charta.*" Yet the most superficial knowledge of history might have taught him that the Restoration, and the crimes and follies of the twenty-

Digitized by Google

eight years which followed the Restoration, were the effects of this Greater Charter. Nor was there much in the means by which that instrument was obtained that could gratify a judicious lover of liberty. A man must hate kings very bitterly, before he can think it desirable that the representatives of the people should be turned out of doors by dragoons, in order to get at a king's head. Walpole's Whiggism, however, was of a very harmless kind. He kept it, as he kept the old spears and helmets at Strawberry Hill, merely for show. He would just as soon have thought of taking down the arms of the ancient Templars and Hospitallers from the walls of his hall, and setting off on a crusade to the Holy Land, as of acting in the spirit of those daring warriors and statesmen, great even in their errors, whose names and seals were affixed to the warrant which he prized so highly. He liked revolution and regicide only when they were a hundred years old. His republicanism, like the courage of a bully, or the love of a fribble, was strong and ardent when there was no occasion for it, and subsided when he had an opportunity of bringing it to the proof. As soon as the revolutionary spirit really began to stir in Europe, as soon as the hatred of kings became something more than a sonorous phrase, he was frightened into a fanatical royalist, and became one of the most extravagant alarmists of those wretched times. In truth, his talk about liberty, whether he knew it or not, was from the beginning a mere cant, the remains of a phraseology which had meant something in the mouths of those from whom he had learned it, but which, in his mouth, meant about as much as the oath by which the Knights of some modern orders bind themselves to redress the wrongs of all injured ladies.

Digitized by Google

He had been fed in his boyhood with Whig speculations on government. He must often have seen, at Houghton or in Downing Street, men who had been Whigs when it was as dangerous to be a Whig as to be a highwayman, men who had voted for the Exclusion Bill, who had been concealed in garrets and cellars after the battle of Sedgemoor, and who had set their names to the declaration that they would live and die with the Prince of Orange. He had acquired the language of these men, and he repeated it by rote, though it was at variance with all his tastes and feelings; just as some old Jacobite families persisted in praying for the Pretender, and in passing their glasses over the water decanter, when they drank the King's health, long after they had become loyal supporters of the government of George the Third. He was a Whig by the accident of hereditary connection; but he was essentially a courtier; and not the less a courtier because he pretended to sneer at the objects which excited his admiration and envy. His real tastes perpetually show themselves through the thin disguise. While professing all the contempt of Bradshaw or Ludlow for crowned heads, he took the trouble to write a book concerning Royal Authors. He pryed with the utmost anxiety into the most minute particulars relating to the Royal family. When he was a child, he was haunted with a longing to see George the First, and gave his mother no peace till she had found a way of gratifying his curiosity. The same feeling, covered with a thousand disguises, attended him to the grave. No observation that dropped from the lips of Majesty seemed to him too trifling to be recorded. The French songs of Prince Frederic, compositions certainly not deserving of preservation on account of

Digitized by Google

their intrinsic merit, have been carefully preserved for us by this contemner of royalty. In truth, every page of Walpole's works bewrays him. This Diogenes, who would be thought to prefer his tub to a palace, and who has nothing to ask of the masters of Windsor and Versailles but that they will stand out of his light, is a gentleman-usher at heart.

He had, it is plain, an uneasy consciousness of the frivolity of his favourite pursuits; and this consciousness produced one of the most diverting of his ten thousand affectations. His busy idleness, his indifference to matters which the world generally regards as important, his passion for trifles, he thought fit to dignify with the name of philosophy. He spoke of himself as of a man whose equanimity was proof to ambitious hopes and fears, who had learned to rate power, wealth, and fame at their true value, and whom the conflict of parties, the rise and fall of statesmen, the ebb and flow of public opinion, moved only to a smile of mingled compassion and disdain. It was owing to the peculiar elevation of his character that he cared about a pinnacle of lath and plaster more than about the Middlesex election, and about a miniature of Grammont more than about the American Revolution. Pitt and Murray might talk themselves hoarse about trifles. But questions of government and war were too insignificant to detain a mind which was occupied in recording the scandal of club-rooms and the whispers of the back-stairs, and which was even capable of selecting and disposing chairs of ebony and shields of rhinoceros-skin.

One of his innumerable whims was an extreme unwillingness to be considered a man of letters. Not that he was indifferent to literary fame. Far from it.

Digitized by Google

Scarcely any writer has ever troubled himself so much about the appearance which his works were to make before posterity. But he had set his heart on incompatible objects. He wished to be a celebrated author, and yet to be a mere idle gentleman, one of those Epicurean gods of the earth who do nothing at all, and who pass their existence in the contemplation of their own perfections. He did not like to have any thing in common with the wretches who lodged in the little courts behind St. Martin's Church, and stole out on Sundays to dine with their bookseller. He avoided the society of authors. He spoke with lordly contempt of the most distinguished among them. He tried to find out some way of writing books, as M. Jourdain's father sold cloth, without derogating from his character of *Gentilhomme*. "Lui, marchand? C'est pure médisance: il ne l'a jamais été. Tout ce qu'il faisait, c'est qu'il était fort obligeant, fort officieux; et comme il se connaissait fort bien en étoffes, il en allait choisir de tous les côtés, les faisait apporter chez lui, et en donnait à ses amis pour de l'argent." There are several amusing instances of Walpole's feeling on this subject in the letters now before us. Mann had complimented him on the learning which appeared in the "Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors;" and it is curious to see how impatiently Walpole bore the imputation of having attended to any thing so unfashionable as the improvement of his mind. "I know nothing. How should I? I who have always lived in the big busy world; who lie a-bed all the morning, calling it morning as long as you please; who sup in company; who have played at faro half my life, and now at loo till two and three in the morning; who have always loved pleasure;

Digitized by Google

haunted auctions. . . . . How I have laughed when some of the Magazines have called me the learned gentleman. Pray don't be like the Magazines." This folly might be pardoned in a boy. But a man between forty and fifty years old, as Walpole then was, ought to be quite as much ashamed of playing at loo till three every morning as of being that vulgar thing, a learned gentleman.

The literary character has undoubtedly its full share of faults, and of very serious and offensive faults. If Walpole had avoided those faults, we could have pardoned the fastidiousness with which he declined all fellowship with men of learning. But from those faults Walpole was not one jot more free than the garreteers from whose contact he shrank. Of literary meannesses and literary vices, his life and his works contain as many instances as the life and the works of any member of Johnson's club. The fact is, that Walpole had the faults of Grub Street, with a large addition from St. James's Street, the vanity, the jealousy, the irritability of a man of letters, the affected superciliousness and apathy of a man of *ton*.

His judgment of literature, of contemporary literature especially, was altogether perverted by his aristocratical feelings. No writer surely was ever guilty of so much false and absurd criticism. He almost invariably speaks with contempt of those books which are now universally allowed to be the best that appeared in his time; and, on the other hand, he speaks of writers of rank and fashion as if they were entitled to the same precedence in literature which would have been allowed to them in a drawing-room. In these letters, for example, he says that he would rather have written the most absurd lines in Lee than

Digitized by Google

Thomson's Seasons. The periodical paper called "The World," on the other hand, was by "our first writers." Who, then, were the first writers of England in the year 1753? Walpole has told us in a note. Our readers will probably guess that Hume, Fielding, Smollett, Richardson, Johnson, Warburton, Collins, Akenside, Gray, Dyer, Young, Warton, Mason, or some of those distinguished men, were in the list. Not one of them. Our first writers, it seems, were Lord Chesterfield, Lord Bath, Mr. W. Whithed, Sir Charles Williams, Mr. Soame Jenyns, Mr. Cambridge, Mr. Coventry. Of these seven personages, Whithed was the lowest in station, but was the most accomplished tuft-hunter of his time. Coventry was of a noble family. The other five had among them two seats in the House of Lords, two seats in the House of Commons, three seats in the Privy Council, a baronetcy, a blue riband, a red riband, about a hundred thousand pounds a year, and not ten pages that are worth reading. The writings of Whithed, Cambridge, Coventry, and Lord Bath are forgotten. Soame Jenyns is remembered chiefly by Johnson's review of the foolish Essay on the Origin of Evil. Lord Chesterfield stands much lower in the estimation of posterity than he would have done if his letters had never been published. The lampoons of Sir Charles Williams are now read only by the curious, and, though not without occasional flashes of wit, have always seemed to us, we must own, very poor performances.

Walpole judged of French literature after the same fashion. He understood and loved the French language. Indeed, he loved it too well. His style is more deeply tainted with Gallicism than that of any other English writer with whom we are acquainted.

Digitized by Google

His composition often reads, for a page together, like a rude translation from the French. We meet every minute with such sentences as these, "One knows what temperaments Annibal Caracci painted." "The impertinent personage!" "She is dead rich." "Lord Dalkeith is dead of the small-pox in three days." "It will not be seen whether he or they are most patriot."

His love of the French language was of a peculiar kind. He loved it as having been for a century the vehicle of all the polite nothings of Europe, as the sign by which the freemasons of fashion recognised each other in every capital from Petersburgh to Naples, as the language of raillery, as the language of anecdote, as the language of memoirs, as the language of correspondence. Its higher uses he altogether disregarded. The literature of France has been to ours what Aaron was to Moses, the expositor of great truths which would else have perished for want of a voice to utter them with distinctness. The relation which existed between Mr. Bentham and M. Dumont is an exact illustration of the intellectual relation in which the two countries stand to each other. The great discoveries in physics, in metaphysics, in political science, are ours. But scarcely any foreign nation except France has received them from us by direct communication. Isolated by our situation, isolated by our manners, we found truth, but we did not impart it. France has been the interpreter between England and mankind.

In the time of Walpole, this process of interpretation was in full activity. The great French writers were busy in proclaiming through Europe the names of Bacon, of Newton, and of Locke. The English

Digitized by Google

principles of toleration, the English respect for personal liberty, the English doctrine that all power is a trust for the public good, were making rapid progress. There is scarcely any thing in history so interesting as that great stirring up of the mind of France, that shaking of the foundations of all established opinions, that uprooting of old truth and old error. It was plain that mighty principles were at work whether for evil or for good. It was plain that a great change in the whole social system was at hand. Fanatics of one kind might anticipate a golden age, in which men should live under the simple dominion of reason, in perfect equality and perfect amity, without property, or marriage, or king, or God. A fanatic of another kind might see nothing in the doctrines of the philosophers but anarchy and atheism, might cling more closely to every old abuse, and might regret the good old days when St. Dominic and Simon de Montfort put down the growing heresies of Provence. A wise man would have seen with regret the excesses into which the reformers were running; but he would have done justice to their genius and to their philanthropy. He would have censured their errors; but he would have remembered that, as Milton has said, error is but opinion in the making. While he condemned their hostility to religion, he would have acknowledged that it was the natural effect of a system under which religion had been constantly exhibited to them in forms which common sense rejected and at which humanity shuddered. While he condemned some of their political doctrines as incompatible with all law, all property, and all civilisation, he would have acknowledged that the subjects of Lewis the Fifteenth had every excuse which men could have for being eager to pull down,

Digitized by Google

and for being ignorant of the far higher art of setting up. While anticipating a fierce conflict, a great and wide-wasting destruction, he would yet have looked forward to the final close with a good hope for France and for mankind.

Walpole had neither hopes nor fears. Though the most Frenchified English writer of the eighteenth century, he troubled himself little about the portents which were daily to be discerned in the French literature of his time. While the most eminent Frenchmen were studying with enthusiastic delight English politics and English philosophy, he was studying as intently the gossip of the old court of France. The fashions and scandal of Versailles and Marli, fashions and scandal a hundred years old, occupied him infinitely more than a great moral revolution which was taking place in his sight. He took a prodigious interest in every noble sharper whose vast volume of wig and infinite length of riband had figured at the dressing or at the tucking up of Lewis the Fourteenth, and of every profligate woman of quality who had carried her train of lovers backward and forward from king to parliament, and from parliament to king during the wars of the *Fronde*. These were the people of whom he treasured up the smallest memorial, of whom he loved to hear the most trifling anecdote, and for whose likenesses he would have given any price. Of the great French writers of his own time, Montesquieu is the only one of whom he speaks with enthusiasm. And even of Montesquieu he speaks with less enthusiasm than of that abject thing, Crébillon the younger, a scribbler as licentious as Louvet and as dull as Rapin. A man must be strangely constituted who can take interest in pedantic journals of the blockades laid by the Duke of A. to the hearts

Digitized by Google

of the Marquise de B. and the Comtesse de C. This trash Walpole extols in language sufficiently high for the merits of Don Quixote. He wished to possess a likeness of Crébillon; and Liotard, the first painter of miniatures then living, was employed to preserve the features of the profligate dunce. The admirer of the *Sopha* and of the *Lettres Athéniennes* had little respect to spare for the men who were then at the head of French literature. He kept carefully out of their way. He tried to keep other people from paying them any attention. He could not deny that Voltaire and Rousseau were clever men; but he took every opportunity of depreciating them. Of D'Alembert he spoke with a contempt which, when the intellectual powers of the two men are compared, seems exquisitely ridiculous. D'Alembert complained that he was accused of having written Walpole's squib against Rousseau. "I hope," says Walpole, "that nobody will attribute D'Alembert's works to me." He was in little danger.

It is impossible to deny, however, that Walpole's writings have real merit, and merit of a very rare, though not of a very high kind. Sir Joshua Reynolds used to say that, though nobody would for a moment compare Claude to Raphael, there would be another Raphael before there was another Claude. And we own that we expect to see fresh Humes and fresh Burkes before we again fall in with that peculiar combination of moral and intellectual qualities to which the writings of Walpole owe their extraordinary popularity.

It is easy to describe him by negatives. He had not a creative imagination. He had not a pure taste. He was not a great reasoner. There is indeed scarcely any writer in whose works it would be possible to find

Digitized by Google

so many contradictory judgments, so many sentences of extravagant nonsense. Nor was it only in his familiar correspondence that he wrote in this flighty and inconsistent manner, but in long and elaborate books, in books repeatedly transcribed and intended for the public eye. We will give an instance or two; for without instances, readers not very familiar with his works will scarcely understand our meaning. In the Anecdotes of Painting, he states, very truly, that the art declined after the commencement of the civil wars. He proceeds to inquire why this happened. The explanation, we should have thought, would have been easily found. He might have mentioned the loss of a king who was the most munificent and judicious patron that the fine arts have ever had in England, the troubled state of the country, the distressed condition of many of the aristocracy, perhaps also the austerity of the victorious party. These circumstances, we conceive, fully account for the phænomenon. But this solution was not odd enough to satisfy Walpole. He discovers another cause for the decline of the art, the want of models. Nothing worth painting, it seems, was left to paint. "How picturesque," he exclaims, "was the figure of an Anabaptist!" — as if puritanism had put out the sun and withered the trees; as if the civil wars had blotted out the expression of character and passion from the human lip and brow; as if many of the men whom Vandyke painted had not been living in the time of the Commonwealth, with faces little the worse for wear; as if many of the beauties afterwards portrayed by Lely were not in their prime before the Restoration; as if the garb or the features of Cromwell and Milton were less picturesque than those of the round-faced peers, as like each other as

Digitized by Google

eggs to eggs, who look out from the middle of the periwigs of Kneller. In the Memoirs, again, Walpole sneers at the Prince of Wales, afterwards George the Third, for presenting a collection of books to one of the American colleges during the Seven Years' War, and says that, instead of books, His Royal Highness ought to have sent arms and ammunition; as if a war ought to suspend all study and all education; or as if it was the business of the Prince of Wales to supply the colonies with military stores out of his own pocket. We have perhaps dwelt too long on these passages; but we have done so because they are specimens of Walpole's manner. Everybody who reads his works with attention, will find that they swarm with loose and foolish observations like those which we have cited; observations which might pass in conversation or in a hasty letter, but which are unpardonable in books deliberately written and repeatedly corrected.

He appears to have thought that he saw very far into men; but we are under the necessity of altogether dissenting from his opinion. We do not conceive that he had any power of discerning the finer shades of character. He practised an art, however, which, though easy and even vulgar, obtains for those who practise it the reputation of discernment with ninety-nine people out of a hundred. He sneered at everybody, put on every action the worst construction which it would bear, "spelt every man backward," to borrow the Lady Hero's phrase,

> "Turned every man the wrong side out,
> And never gave to truth and virtue that
> Which simpleness and merit purchaseth."

In this way any man may, with little sagacity and lit-

Digitized by Google

tle trouble, be considered by those whose good opinion is not worth having as a great judge of character.

It is said that the hasty and rapacious Kneller used to send away the ladies who sate to him as soon as he had sketched their faces, and to paint the figure and hands from his housemaid. It was in much the same way that Walpole portrayed the minds of others. He copied from the life only those glaring and obvious peculiarities which could not escape the most superficial observation. The rest of the canvas he filled up, in a careless dashing way, with knave and fool, mixed in such proportions as pleased Heaven. What a difference between these daubs and the masterly portraits of Clarendon.

There are contradictions without end in the sketches of character which abound in Walpole's works. But if we were to form our opinion of his eminent contemporaries from a general survey of what he has written concerning them, we should say that Pitt was a strutting, ranting, mouthing actor, Charles Townshend an impudent and voluble jack-pudding, Murray a demure, cold-blooded, cowardly hypocrite, Hardwicke an insolent upstart, with the understanding of a pettifogger and the heart of a hangman, Temple an impertinent poltroon, Egmont a solemn coxcomb, Lyttelton a poor creature whose only wish was to go to heaven in a coronet, Onslow a pompous proser, Washington a braggart, Lord Camden sullen, Lord Townshend malevolent, Secker an atheist who had shammed Christian for a mitre, Whitefield an impostor who swindled his converts out of their watches. The Walpoles fare little better than their neighbours. Old Horace is constantly represented as a coarse, brutal, niggardly buffoon, and his son as worthy of such a father. In short,

Digitized by Google

if we are to trust this discerning judge of human nature, England in his time contained little sense and no virtue, except what was distributed between himself, Lord Waldgrave, and Marshal Conway.

Of such a writer it is scarcely necessary to say, that his works are destitute of every charm which is derived from elevation or from tenderness of sentiment. When he chose to be humane, and magnanimous, — for he sometimes, by way of variety, tried this affectation, — he overdid his part most ludicrously. None of his many disguises sat so awkwardly upon him. For example, he tells us that he did not choose to be intimate with Mr. Pitt. And why? Because Mr. Pitt had been among the persecutors of his father? Or because, as he repeatedly assures us, Mr. Pitt was a disagreeable man in private life? Not at all; but because Mr. Pitt was too fond of war, and was great with too little reluctance. Strange that a habitual scoffer like Walpole should imagine that this cant could impose on the dullest reader! If Molière had put such a speech into the mouth of Tartuffe, we should have said that the fiction was unskilful, and that Orgon could not have been such a fool as to be taken in by it. Of the twenty-six years during which Walpole sat in Parliament, thirteen were years of war. Yet he did not, during all those thirteen years, utter a single word or give a single vote tending to peace. His most intimate friend, the only friend, indeed, to whom he appears to have been sincerely attached, Conway, was a soldier, was fond of his profession, and was perpetually entreating Mr. Pitt to give him employment. In this Walpole saw nothing but what was admirable. Conway was a hero for soliciting the command of expeditions which Mr. Pitt was a monster for sending out.

Digitized by Google

What then is the charm, the irresistible charm, of Walpole's writings? It consists, we think, in the art of amusing without exciting. He never convinces the reason, or fills the imagination, or touches the heart; but he keeps the mind of the reader constantly attentive and constantly entertained. He had a strange ingenuity peculiarly his own, an ingenuity which appeared in all that he did, in his building, in his gardening, in his upholstery, in the matter and in the manner of his writings. If we were to adopt the classification, not a very accurate classification, which Akenside has given of the pleasures of the imagination, we should say that with the Sublime and the Beautiful Walpole had nothing to do, but that the third province, the Odd, was his peculiar domain. The motto which he prefixed to his Catalogue of Royal and Noble Authors might have been inscribed with perfect propriety over the door of every room in his house, and on the title-page of every one of his books; "Dove diavolo, Messer Ludovico, avete pigliate tante coglionerie?" In his villa, every apartment is a museum; every piece of furniture is a curiosity: there is something strange in the form of the shovel; there is a long story belonging to the bell-rope. We wander among a profusion of rarities, of trifling intrinsic value, but so quaint in fashion, or connected with such remarkable names and events, that they may well detain our attention for a moment. A moment is enough. Some new relic, some new unique, some new carved work, some new enamel, is forthcoming in an instant. One cabinet of trinkets is no sooner closed than another is opened. It is the same with Walpole's writings. It is not in their utility, it is not in their beauty, that their attraction lies. They are to the works of great historians

Digitized by Google

and poets, what Strawberry Hill is to the Museum of Sir Hans Sloane or to the Gallery of Florence. Walpole is constantly showing us things, not of very great value indeed, yet things which we are pleased to see, and which we can see nowhere else. They are baubles; but they are made curiosities either by his grotesque workmanship or by some association belonging to them. His style is one of those peculiar styles by which every body is attracted, and which nobody can safely venture to imitate. He is a mannerist whose manner has become perfectly easy to him. His affectation is so habitual and so universal that it can hardly be called affectation. The affectation is the essence of the man. It pervades all his thoughts and all his expressions. If it were taken away, nothing would be left. He coins new words, distorts the senses of old words, and twists sentences into forms which make grammarians stare. But all this he does, not only with an air of ease, but as if he could not help doing it. His wit was, in its essential properties, of the same kind with that of Cowley and Donne. Like theirs, it consisted in an exquisite perception of points of analogy and points of contrast too subtile for common observation. Like them, Walpole perpetually startles us by the ease with which he yokes together ideas between which there would seem, at first sight, to be no connection. But he did not, like them, affect the gravity of a lecture, and draw his illustrations from the laboratory and from the schools. His tone was light and fleering; his topics were the topics of the club and the ball-room; and therefore his strange combinations and far-fetched allusions, though very closely resembling those which tire us to death in the poems of the time of Charles the First, are read with pleasure constantly new.

Digitized by Google

No man who has written so much is so seldom tiresome. In his books there are scarcely any of those passages which, in our school days, we used to call *skip*. Yet he often wrote on subjects which are generally considered as dull, on subjects which men of great talents have in vain endeavoured to render popular. When we compare the Historic Doubts about Richard the Third with Whitaker's and Chalmers's books on a far more interesting question, the character of Mary Queen of Scots; when we compare the Anecdotes of Painting with the works of Anthony Wood, of Nichols, of Granger, we at once see Walpole's superiority, not in industry, not in learning, not in accuracy, not in logical power, but in the art of writing what people will like to read. He rejects all but the attractive parts of his subject. He keeps only what is in itself amusing, or what can be made so by the artifice of his diction. The coarser morsels of antiquarian learning he abandons to others, and sets out an entertainment worthy of a Roman epicure, an entertainment consisting of nothing but delicacies, the brains of singing birds, the roe of mullets, the sunny halves of peaches. This, we think, is the great merit of his romance. There is little skill in the delineation of the characters. Manfred is as commonplace a tyrant, Jerome as commonplace a confessor, Theodore as commonplace a young gentleman, Isabella and Matilda as commonplace a pair of young ladies, as are to be found in any of the thousand Italian castles in which *condottieri* have revelled or in which imprisoned duchesses have pined. We cannot say that we much admire the big man whose sword is dug up in one quarter of the globe, whose helmet drops from the clouds in another, and who, after clattering and rust

Digitized by Google

ling for some days, ends by kicking the house down. But the story, whatever its value may be, never flags for a single moment. There are no digressions, or unseasonable descriptions, or long speeches. Every sentence carries the action forward. The excitement is constantly renewed. Absurd as is the machinery, insipid as are the human actors, no reader probably ever thought the book dull.

Walpole's letters are generally considered as his best performances, and, we think, with reason. His faults are far less offensive to us in his correspondence than in his books. His wild, absurd, and ever-changing opinions about men and things are easily pardoned in familiar letters. His bitter, scoffing, depreciating disposition does not show itself in so unmitigated a manner as in his Memoirs. A writer of letters must in general be civil and friendly to his correspondent at least, if to no other person.

He loved letter-writing, and had evidently studied it as an art. It was, in truth, the very kind of writing for such a man, for a man very ambitious to rank among wits, yet nervously afraid that, while obtaining the reputation of a wit, he might lose caste as a gentleman. There was nothing vulgar in writing a letter. Not even Ensign Northerton, not even the Captain described in Hamilton's Bawn, — and Walpole, though the author of many quartos, had some feelings in common with those gallant officers, — would have denied that a gentleman might sometimes correspond with a friend. Whether Walpole bestowed much labour on the composition of his letters, it is impossible to judge from internal evidence. There are passages which seem perfectly unstudied. But the appearance of ease may be the effect of labour. There are passages which have a very

Digitized by Google

artificial air. But they may have been produced without effort by a mind of which the natural ingenuity had been improved into morbid quickness by constant exercise. We are never sure that we see him as he was. We are never sure that what appears to be nature is not disguised art. We are never sure that what appears to be art is not merely habit which has become second nature.

In wit and animation the present collection is not superior to those which have preceded it. But it has one great advantage over them all. It forms a connected whole, a regular journal of what appeared to Walpole the most important transactions of the last twenty years of George the Second's reign. It furnishes much new information concerning the history of that time, the portion of English history of which common readers know the least.

The earlier letters contain the most lively and interesting account which we possess of that "great Walpolean battle," to use the words of Junius, which terminated in the retirement of Sir Robert. Horace entered the House of Commons just in time to witness the last desperate struggle which his father, surrounded by enemies and traitors, maintained, with a spirit as brave as that of the column of Fontenoy, first for victory, and then for honourable retreat. Horace was, of course, on the side of his family. Lord Dover seems to have been enthusiastic on the same side, and goes so far as to call Sir Robert "the glory of the Whigs."

Sir Robert deserved this high eulogium, we think, as little as he deserved the abusive epithets which have often been coupled with his name. A fair character of him still remains to be drawn; and, whenever it shall be drawn, it will be equally unlike the portrait by Coxe and the portrait by Smollett.

Digitized by Google

He had, undoubtedly, great talents and great virtues. He was not, indeed, like the leaders of the party which opposed his government, a brilliant orator. He was not a profound scholar, like Carteret, or a wit and a fine gentleman, like Chesterfield. In all these respects his deficiencies were remarkable. His literature consisted of a scrap or two of Horace and an anecdote or two from the end of the Dictionary. His knowledge of history was so limited that, in the great debate on the Excise Bill, he was forced to ask Attorney-General Yorke who Empson and Dudley were. His manners were a little too coarse and boisterous even for that age of Westerns and Topehalls. When he ceased to talk of politics, he could talk of nothing but women; and he dilated on his favourite theme with a freedom which shocked even that plain-spoken generation, and which was quite unsuited to his age and station. The noisy revelry of his summer festivities at Houghton gave much scandal to grave people, and annually drove his kinsman and colleague, Lord Townshend, from the neighbouring mansion of Rainham.

But, however ignorant Walpole might be of general history and of general literature, he was better acquainted than any man of his day with what it concerned him most to know, mankind, the English nation, the Court, the House of Commons, and the Treasury. Of foreign affairs he knew little; but his judgment was so good that his little knowledge went very far. He was an excellent parliamentary debater, an excellent parliamentary tactician, an excellent man of business. No man ever brought more industry or more method to the transacting of affairs. No minister in his time did so much; yet no minister had so much leisure.

Digitized by Google

He was a good-natured man who had during thirty years seen nothing but the worst parts of human nature in other men. He was familiar with the malice of kind people, and the perfidy of honourable people. Proud men had licked the dust before him. Patriots had begged him to come up to the price of their puffed and advertised integrity. He said after his fall that it was a dangerous thing to be a minister, that there were few minds which would not be injured by the constant spectacle of meanness and depravity. To his honour it must be confessed that few minds have come out of such a trial so little damaged in the most important parts. He retired, after more than twenty years of supreme power, with a temper not soured, with a heart not hardened, with simple tastes, with frank manners, and with a capacity for friendship. No stain of treachery, of ingratitude, or of cruelty rests on his memory. Factious hatred, while flinging on his name every other foul aspersion, was compelled to own that he was not a man of blood. This would scarcely seem a high eulogium on a statesman of our times. It was then a rare and honourable distinction. The contests of parties in England had long been carried on with a ferocity unworthy of a civilised people. Sir Robert Walpole was the minister who gave to our Government that character of lenity which it has since generally preserved. It was perfectly known to him that many of his opponents had dealings with the Pretender. The lives of some were at his mercy. He wanted neither Whig nor Tory precedents for using his advantage unsparingly. But with a clemency to which posterity has never done justice, he suffered himself to be thwarted, vilified, and at last overthrown, by a party which included many men whose necks were in his power.

Digitized by Google

That he practised corruption on a large scale is, we think, indisputable. But whether he deserves all the invectives which have been uttered against him on that account may be questioned. No man ought to be severely censured for not being beyond his age in virtue. To buy the votes of constituents is as immoral as to buy the votes of representatives. The candidate who gives five guineas to the freeman is as culpable as the man who gives three hundred guineas to the member. Yet we know, that, in our time, no man is thought wicked or dishonourable, no man is cut, no man is black-balled, because, under the old system of election, he was returned in the only way in which he could be returned, for East Retford, for Liverpool, or for Stafford. Walpole governed by corruption, because, in his time, it was impossible to govern otherwise. Corruption was unnecessary to the Tudors; for their Parliaments were feeble. The publicity which has of late years been given to parliamentary proceedings has raised the standard of morality among public men. The power of public opinion is so great that, even before the reform of the representation, a faint suspicion that a minister had given pecuniary gratifications to Members of Parliament in return for their votes would have been enough to ruin him. But, during the century which followed the Restoration, the House of Commons was in that situation in which assemblies must be managed by corruption, or cannot be managed at all. It was not held in awe as in the sixteenth century, by the throne. It was not held in awe as in the nineteenth century, by the opinion of the people. Its constitution was oligarchical. Its deliberations were secret. Its power in the State was immense. The Government had every conceivable motive to offer

Digitized by Google

bribes. Many of the members, if they were not men of strict honour and probity, had no conceivable motive to refuse what the Government offered. In the reign of Charles the Second, accordingly, the practice of buying votes in the House of Commons was commenced by the daring Clifford, and carried to a great extent by the crafty and shameless Danby. The Revolution, great and manifold as were the blessings of which it was directly or remotely the cause, at first aggravated this evil. The importance of the House of Commons was now greater than ever. The prerogatives of the Crown were more strictly limited than ever; and those associations in which, more than in its legal prerogatives, its power had consisted, were completely broken. No prince was ever in so helpless and distressing a situation as William the Third. The party which defended his title was, on general grounds, disposed to curtail his prerogative. The party which was, on general grounds, friendly to prerogative, was adverse to his title. There was no quarter in which both his office and his person could find favour. But while the influence of the House of Commons in the Government was becoming paramount, the influence of the people over the House of Commons was declining. It mattered little in the time of Charles the First whether that House were or were not chosen by the people; it was certain to act for the people, because it would have been at the mercy of the Court but for the support of the people. Now that the Court was at the mercy of the House of Commons, those members who were not returned by popular elections had nobody to please but themselves. Even those who were returned by popular election did not live, as now, under a constant sense of responsibility. The constituents were not, as now, daily ap-

Digitized by Google

prised of the votes and speeches of their representatives. The privileges which had in old times been indispensably necessary to the security and efficiency of Parliaments were now superfluous. But they were still carefully maintained, by honest legislators from superstitious veneration, by dishonest legislators for their own selfish ends. They had been an useful defence to the Commons during a long and doubtful conflict with powerful sovereigns. They were now no longer necessary for that purpose; and they became a defence to the members against their constituents. That secrecy which had been absolutely necessary in times when the Privy Council was in the habit of sending the leaders of Opposition to the Tower was preserved in times when a vote of the House of Commons was sufficient to hurl the most powerful minister from his post.

The Government could not go on unless the Parliament could be kept in order. And how was the Parliament to be kept in order? Three hundred years ago it would have been enough for a statesman to have the support of the Crown. It would now, we hope and believe, be enough for him to enjoy the confidence and approbation of the great body of the middle class. A hundred years ago it would not have been enough to have both Crown and people on his side. The Parliament had shaken off the control of the Royal prerogative. It had not yet fallen under the control of public opinion. A large proportion of the members had absolutely no motive to support any administration except their own interest, in the lowest sense of the word. Under these circumstances, the country could be governed only by corruption. Bolingbroke, who was the ablest and the most vehement of those who raised the clamour against corruption, had no better remedy to

Digitized by Google

propose than that the Royal prerogative should be strengthened. The remedy would no doubt have been efficient. The only question is, whether it would not have been worse than the disease. The fault was in the constitution of the Legislature; and to blame those ministers who managed the Legislature in the only way in which it could be managed is gross injustice. They submitted to extortion because they could not help themselves. We might as well accuse the poor Lowland farmers who paid black mail to Rob Roy of corrupting the virtue of the Highlanders, as accuse Sir Robert Walpole of corrupting the virtue of Parliament. His crime was merely this, that he employed his money more dexterously, and got more support in return for it, than any of those who preceded or followed him.

He was himself incorruptible by money. His dominant passion was the love of power: and the heaviest charge which can be brought against him is that to this passion he never scrupled to sacrifice the interests of his country.

One of the maxims which, as his son tells us, he was most in the habit of repeating, was, *quieta non movere*. It was indeed the maxim by which he generally regulated his public conduct. It is the maxim of a man more solicitous to hold power long than to use it well. It is remarkable that, though he was at the head of affairs during more than twenty years, not one great measure, not one important change for the better or for the worse in any part of our institutions, marks the period of his supremacy. Nor was this because he did not clearly see that many changes were very desirable. He had been brought up in the school of toleration, at the feet of Somers and of Burnet. He disliked the shameful laws against Dissenters. But he never could

Digitized by Google

be induced to bring forward a proposition for repealing them. The sufferers represented to him the injustice with which they were treated, boasted of their firm attachment to the House of Brunswick and to the Whig party, and reminded him of his own repeated declarations of good will to their cause. He listened, assented, promised, and did nothing. At length, the question was brought forward by others, and the Minister, after a hesitating and evasive speech, voted against it. The truth was that he remembered to the latest day of his life that terrible explosion of high-church feeling which the foolish prosecution of a foolish parson had occasioned in the days of Queen Anne. If the Dissenters had been turbulent he would probably have relieved them: but while he apprehended no danger from them, he would not run the slightest risk for their sake. He acted in the same manner with respect to other questions. He knew the state of the Scotch Highlands. He was constantly predicting another insurrection in that part of the empire. Yet, during his long tenure of power, he never attempted to perform what was then the most obvious and pressing duty of a British Statesman, to break the power of the Chiefs, and to establish the authority of law through the furthest corners of the Island. Nobody knew better than he that, if this were not done, great mischiefs would follow. But the Highlands were tolerably quiet in his time. He was content to meet daily emergencies by daily expedients; and he left the rest to his successors. They had to conquer the Highlands in the midst of a war with France and Spain, because he had not regulated the Highlands in a time of profound peace.

Sometimes, in spite of all his caution, he found that measures which he had hoped to carry through quietly

Digitized by Google

had caused great agitation. When this was the case he generally modified or withdrew them. It was thus that he cancelled Wood's patent in compliance with the absurd outcry of the Irish. It was thus that he frittered away the Porteous Bill to nothing, for fear of exasperating the Scotch. It was thus that he abandoned the Excise Bill, as soon as he found that it was offensive to all the great towns of England. The language which he held about that measure in a subsequent session is strikingly characteristic. Pulteney had insinuated that the scheme would be again brought forward. "As to the wicked scheme," said Walpole, "as the gentleman is pleased to call it, which he would persuade gentlemen is not yet laid aside, I for my part assure this House I am not so mad as ever again to engage in any thing that looks like an Excise; though, in my private opinion, I still think it was a scheme that would have tended very much to the interest of the nation."

The conduct of Walpole with regard to the Spanish war is the great blemish of his public life. Archdeacon Coxe imagined that he had discovered one grand principle of action to which the whole public conduct of his hero ought to be referred. "Did the administration of Walpole," says the biographer, "present any uniform principle which may be traced in every part, and which gave combination and consistency to the whole? Yes, and that principle was, THE LOVE OF PEACE." It would be difficult, we think, to bestow a higher eulogium on any statesman. But the eulogium is far too high for the merits of Walpole. The great ruling principle of his public conduct was indeed a love of peace, but not in the sense in which Archdeacon Coxe uses the phrase. The peace which Walpole sought was not the peace of the country, but the peace

Digitized by Google

of his own administration. During the greater part of his public life, indeed, the two objects were inseparably connected. At length he was reduced to the necessity of choosing between them, of plunging the State into hostilities for which there was no just ground, and by which nothing was to be got, or of facing a violent opposition in the country, in Parliament, and even in the royal closet. No person was more thoroughly convinced than he of the absurdity of the cry against Spain. But his darling power was at stake, and his choice was soon made. He preferred an unjust war to a stormy session. It is impossible to say of a Minister who acted thus that the love of peace was the one grand principle to which all his conduct is to be referred. The governing principle of his conduct was neither love of peace nor love of war, but love of power.

The praise to which he is fairly entitled is this, that he understood the true interest of his country better than any of his contemporaries, and that he pursued that interest whenever it was not incompatible with the interests of his own intense and grasping ambition. It was only in matters of public moment that he shrank from agitation and had recourse to compromise. In his contests for personal influence there was no timidity, no flinching. He would have all or none. Every member of the Government who would not submit to his ascendency was turned out or forced to resign. Liberal of every thing else, he was avaricious of power. Cautious everywhere else, when power was at stake he had all the boldness of Richelieu or Chatham. He might easily have secured his authority if he could have been induced to divide it with others. But he would not part with one fragment of it to purchase defenders for all the rest. The effect of this policy

Digitized by Google

was that he had able enemies and feeble allies. His most distinguished coadjutors left him one by one, and joined the ranks of the Opposition. He faced the increasing array of his enemies with unbroken spirit, and thought it far better that they should attack his power than that they should share it.

The Opposition was in every sense formidable. At its head were two royal personages, the exiled head of the House of Stuart, the disgraced heir of the House of Brunswick. One set of members received directions from Avignon. Another set held their consultations and banquets at Norfolk House. The majority of the landed gentry, the majority of the parochial clergy, one of the universities, and a strong party in the City of London and in the other great towns, were decidedly adverse to the Government. Of the men of letters, some were exasperated by the neglect with which the Minister treated them, a neglect which was the more remarkable, because his predecessors, both Whig and Tory, had paid court with emulous munificence to the wits and the poets; others were honestly inflamed by party zeal; almost all lent their aid to the Opposition. In truth, all that was alluring to ardent and imaginative minds was on that side; old associations, new visions of political improvement, high-flown theories of loyalty, high-flown theories of liberty, the enthusiasm of the Cavalier, the enthusiasm of the Roundhead. The Tory gentleman, fed in the common-rooms of Oxford with the doctrines of Filmer and Sacheverell, and proud of the exploits of his great grandfather, who had charged with Rupert at Marston, who had held out the old manor-house against Fairfax, and who, after the King's return, had been set down for a Knight of the Royal Oak, flew to that section of the

Digitized by Google

opposition which, under pretence of assailing the existing administration, was in truth assailing the reigning dynasty. The young republican, fresh from his Livy and his Lucan, and glowing with admiration of Hampden, of Russell, and of Sydney, hastened with equal eagerness to those benches from which eloquent voices thundered nightly against the tyranny and perfidy of courts. So many young politicians were caught by these declamations that Sir Robert, in one of his best speeches, observed that the opposition consisted of three bodies, the Tories, the discontented Whigs, who were known by the name of the Patriots, and the Boys. In fact almost every young man of warm temper and lively imagination, whatever his political bias might be, was drawn into the party adverse to the Government; and some of the most distinguished among them, Pitt, for example, among public men, and Johnson, among men of letters, afterwards openly acknowledged their mistake.

The aspect of the Opposition, even while it was still a minority in the House of Commons, was very imposing. Among those who, in Parliament or out of Parliament, assailed the administration of Walpole, were Bolingbroke, Carteret, Chesterfield, Argyle, Pulteney, Wyndham, Doddington, Pitt, Lyttelton, Barnard, Pope, Swift, Gay, Arbuthnot, Fielding, Johnson, Thomson, Akenside, Glover.

The circumstance that the Opposition was divided into two parties, diametrically opposed to each other in political opinions, was long the safety of Walpole. It was at last his ruin. The leaders of the minority knew that it would be difficult for them to bring forward any important measure without producing an immediate schism in their party. It was with very

Digitized by Google

great difficulty that the Whigs in opposition had been induced to give a sullen and silent vote for the repeal of the Septennial Act. The Tories, on the other hand, could not be induced to support Pulteney's motion for an addition to the income of Prince Frederic. The two parties had cordially joined in calling out for a war with Spain; but they now had their war. Hatred of Walpole was almost the only feeling which was common to them. On this one point, therefore, they concentrated their whole strength. With gross ignorance, or gross dishonesty, they represented the Minister as the main grievance of the state. His dismissal, his punishment, would prove the certain cure for all the evils which the nation suffered. What was to be done after his fall, how misgovernment was to be prevented in future, were questions to which there were as many answers as there were noisy and ill-informed members of the Opposition. The only cry in which all could join was, "Down with Walpole!" So much did they narrow the disputed ground, so purely personal did they make the question, that they threw out friendly hints to the other members of the Administration, and declared that they refused quarter to the Prime Minister alone. His tools might keep their heads, their fortunes, even their places, if only the great father of corruption were given up to the just vengeance of the nation.

If the fate of Walpole's colleagues had been inseparably bound up with his, he probably would, even after the unfavourable elections of 1741, have been able to weather the storm. But as soon as it was understood that the attack was directed against him alone, and that, if he were sacrificed, his associates might expect advantageous and honourable terms,

Digitized by Google

the ministerial ranks began to waver, and the murmur of *sauve qui peut* was heard. That Walpole had foul play is almost certain, but to what extent it is difficult to say. Lord Islay was suspected; the Duke of Newcastle something more than suspected. It would have been strange, indeed, if his Grace had been idle when treason was hatching.

"Ch' i' ho de' traditor' sempre sospetto,
E Gan fu traditor prima che nato."

"His name," said Sir Robert, "is perfidy."

Never was a battle more manfully fought out than the last struggle of the old statesman. His clear judgment, his long experience, and his fearless spirit, enabled him to maintain a defensive war through half the session. To the last his heart never failed him; and, when at last he yielded, he yielded not to the threats of his enemies, but to the entreaties of his dispirited and refractory followers. When he could no longer retain his power, he compounded for honour and security, and retired to his garden and his paintings, leaving to those who had overthrown him shame, discord, and ruin.

Every thing was in confusion. It has been said that the confusion was produced by the dexterous policy of Walpole; and, undoubtedly, he did his best to sow dissension amongst his triumphant enemies. But there was little for him to do. Victory had completely dissolved the hollow truce, which the two sections of the Opposition had but imperfectly observed, even while the event of the contest was still doubtful. A thousand questions were opened in a moment. A thousand conflicting claims were preferred. It was impossible to follow any line of policy which would not have been offensive to a large portion

Digitized by Google

of the successful party. It was impossible to find places for a tenth part of those who thought that they had a right to office. While the parliamentary leaders were preaching patience and confidence, while their followers were clamouring for reward, a still louder voice was heard from without, the terrible cry of a people angry, they hardly knew with whom, and impatient they hardly knew for what. The day of retribution had arrived. The Opposition reaped that which they had sown. Inflamed with hatred and cupidity, despairing of success by any ordinary mode of political warfare, and blind to consequences which, though remote, were certain, they had conjured up a devil whom they could not lay. They had made the public mind drunk with calumny and declamation. They had raised expectations which it was impossible to satisfy. The downfall of Walpole was to be the beginning of a political millennium; and every enthusiast had figured to himself that millennium according to the fashion of his own wishes. The republican expected that the power of the Crown would be reduced to a mere shadow, the high Tory that the Stuarts would be restored, the moderate Tory that the golden days which the Church and the landed interest had enjoyed during the last years of Queen Anne, would immediately return. It would have been impossible to satisfy everybody. The conquerors satisfied nobody.

We have no reverence for the memory of those who were then called the patriots. We are for the principles of good government against Walpole, and for Walpole against the Opposition. It was most desirable that a purer system should be introduced; but, if the old system was to be retained, no man was so fit as Walpole to be at the head of affairs. There

Digitized by Google

were grievous abuses in the government, abuses more than sufficient to justify a strong opposition. But the party opposed to Walpole, while they stimulated the popular fury to the highest point, were at no pains to direct it aright. Indeed they studiously misdirected it. They misrepresented the evil. They prescribed inefficient and pernicious remedies. They held up a single man as the sole cause of all the vices of a bad system which had been in full operation before his entrance into public life, and which continued to be in full operation when some of these very brawlers had succeeded to his power. They thwarted his best measures. They drove him into an unjustifiable war against his will. Constantly talking in magnificent language about tyranny, corruption, wicked ministers, servile courtiers, the liberty of Englishmen, the Great Charter, the rights for which our fathers bled, Timoleon, Brutus, Hampden, Sydney, they had absolutely nothing to propose which would have been an improvement on our institutions. Instead of directing the public mind to definite reforms which might have completed the work of the revolution, which might have brought the legislature into harmony with the nation, and which might have prevented the Crown from doing by influence what it could no longer do by prerogative, they excited a vague craving for change, by which they profited for a single moment, and of which, as they well deserved, they were soon the victims.

Among the reforms which the state then required, there were two of paramount importance, two which would alone have remedied almost every gross abuse, and without which all other remedies would have been unavailing, the publicity of parliamentary proceedings, and the abolition of the rotten boroughs. Neither of

Digitized by Google

these was thought of. It seems to us clear that, if these were not adopted, all other measures would have been illusory. Some of the patriots suggested changes which would, beyond all doubt, have increased the existing evils a hundred fold. These men wished to transfer the disposal of employments and the command of the army from the Crown to the Parliament; and this on the very ground that the Parliament had long been a grossly corrupt body. The security against malpractices was to be that the members, instead of having a portion of the public plunder doled out to them by a minister, were to help themselves.

The other schemes of which the public mind was full were less dangerous than this. Some of them were in themselves harmless. But none of them would have done much good, and most of them were extravagantly absurd. What they were we may learn from the instructions which many constituent bodies, immediately after the change of administration, sent up to their representatives. A more deplorable collection of follies can hardly be imagined. There is, in the first place, a general cry for Walpole's head. Then there are bitter complaints of the decay of trade, a decay which, in the judgment of these enlightened politicians, was brought about by Walpole and corruption. They would have been nearer to the truth if they had attributed their sufferings to the war into which they had driven Walpole against his better judgment. He had foretold the effects of his unwilling concession. On the day when hostilities against Spain were proclaimed, when the heralds were attended into the city by the chiefs of the Opposition, when the Prince of Wales himself stopped at Temple-Bar to drink success to the English arms, the Minister

Digitized by Google

heard all the steeples of the city jingling with a merry peal, and muttered, "They may ring the bells now: they will be wringing their hands before long."

Another grievance, for which of course Walpole and corruption were answerable, was the great exportation of English wool. In the judgment of the sagacious electors of several large towns, the remedying of this evil was a matter second only in importance to the hanging of Sir Robert. There were also earnest injunctions that the members should vote against standing armies in time of peace, injunctions which were, to say the least, ridiculously unseasonable in the midst of a war which was likely to last, and which did actually last, as long as the Parliament. The repeal of the Septennial Act, as was to be expected, was strongly pressed. Nothing was more natural than that the voters should wish for a triennial recurrence of their bribes and their ale. We feel firmly convinced that the repeal of the Septennial Act, unaccompanied by a complete reform of the constitution of the elective body, would have been an unmixed curse to the country. The only rational recommendation which we can find in all these instructions is that the number of placemen in Parliament should be limited, and that pensioners should not be allowed to sit there. It is plain, however, that this cure was far from going to the root of the evil, and that, if it had been adopted without other reforms, secret bribery would probably have been more practised than ever.

We will give one more instance of the absurd expectations which the declamations of the Opposition had raised in the country. Akenside was one of the fiercest and most uncompromising of the young patriots

Digitized by Google

out of Parliament. When he found that the change of administration had produced no change of system, he gave vent to his indignation in the "Epistle to Curio," the best poem that he ever wrote, a poem, indeed, which seems to indicate, that, if he had left lyric composition to Gray and Collins, and had employed his powers in grave and elevated satire, he might have disputed the preëminence of Dryden. But whatever be the literary merits of the epistle, we can say nothing in praise of the political doctrines which it inculcates. The poet, in a rapturous apostrophe to the spirits of the great men of antiquity, tells us what he expected from Pulteney at the moment of the fall of the tyrant.

> "See private life by wisest arts reclaimed,
> See ardent youth to noblest manners framed,
> See us achieve whate'er was sought by you,
> If Curio — only Curio — will be true."

It was Pulteney's business, it seems, to abolish faro and masquerades, to stint the young Duke of Marlborough to a bottle of brandy a day, and to prevail on Lady Vane to be content with three lovers at a time.

Whatever the people wanted, they certainly got nothing. Walpole retired in safety; and the multitude were defrauded of the expected show on Tower Hill. The Septennial Act was not repealed. The placemen were not turned out of the House of Commons. Wool, we believe, was still exported. "Private life" afforded as much scandal as if the reign of Walpole and corruption had continued; and "ardent youth" fought with watchmen and betted with blacklegs as much as ever.

The colleagues of Walpole had, after his retreat, admitted some of the chiefs of the Opposition into the

Digitized by Google

Government, and soon found themselves compelled to submit to the ascendency of one of their new allies. This was Lord Carteret, afterwards Earl Granville. No public man of that age had greater courage, greater ambition, greater activity, greater talents for debate or for declamation. No public man had such profound and extensive learning. He was familiar with the ancient writers, and loved to sit up till midnight discussing philological and metrical questions with Bentley. His knowledge of modern languages was prodigious. The privy council, when he was present, needed no interpreter. He spoke and wrote French, Italian, Spanish, Portuguese, German, even Swedish. He had pushed his researches into the most obscure nooks of literature. He was as familiar with Canonists and Schoolmen as with orators and poets. He had read all that the universities of Saxony and Holland had produced on the most intricate questions of public law. Harte, in the preface to the second edition of his History of Gustavus Adolphus, bears a remarkable testimony to the extent and accuracy of Lord Carteret's knowledge. "It was my good fortune or prudence to keep the main body of my army (or in other words my matters of fact) safe and entire. The late Earl of Granville was pleased to declare himself of this opinion; especially when he found that I had made Chemnitius one of my principal guides; for his Lordship was apprehensive I might not have seen that valuable and authentic book, which is extremely scarce. I thought myself happy to have contented his Lordship even in the lowest degree: for he understood the German and Swedish histories to the highest perfection."

With all this learning, Carteret was far from being a pedant. His was not one of those cold spirits of which

Digitized by Google

the fire is put out by the fuel. In council, in debate, in society, he was all life and energy. His measures were strong, prompt, and daring, his oratory animated and glowing. His spirits were constantly high. No misfortune, public or private, could depress him. He was at once the most unlucky and the happiest public man of his time.

He had been Secretary of State in Walpole's Administration, and had acquired considerable influence over the mind of George the First. The other ministers could speak no German. The King could speak no English. All the communication that Walpole held with his master was in very bad Latin. Carteret dismayed his colleagues by the volubility with which he addressed his Majesty in German. They listened with envy and terror to the mysterious gutturals which might possibly convey suggestions very little in unison with their wishes.

Walpole was not a man to endure such a colleague as Carteret. The King was induced to give up his favourite. Carteret joined the Opposition, and signalised himself at the head of that party till, after the retirement of his old rival, he again became Secretary of State.

During some months he was chief Minister, indeed sole Minister. He gained the confidence and regard of George the Second. He was at the same time in high favour with the Prince of Wales. As a debater in the House of Lords, he had no equal among his colleagues. Among his opponents, Chesterfield alone could be considered as his match. Confident in his talents, and in the royal favour, he neglected all those means by which the power of Walpole had been created and maintained. His head was full of treaties

Digitized by Google

and expeditions, of schemes for supporting the Queen of Hungary and for humbling the House of Bourbon. He contemptuously abandoned to others all the drudgery, and, with the drudgery, all the fruits of corruption. The patronage of the Church and of the Bar he left to the Pelhams as a trifle unworthy of his care. One of the judges, Chief Justice Willes, if we remember rightly, went to him to beg some ecclesiastical preferment for a friend. Carteret said, that he was too much occupied with continental politics to think about the disposal of places and benefices. "You may rely on it, then," said the Chief Justice, "that people who want places and benefices will go to those who have more leisure." The prediction was accomplished. It would have been a busy time indeed in which the Pelhams had wanted leisure for jobbing; and to the Pelhams the whole cry of place-hunters and pension-hunters resorted. The parliamentary influence of the two brothers became stronger every day, till at length they were at the head of a decided majority in the House of Commons. Their rival, meanwhile, conscious of his powers, sanguine in his hopes, and proud of the storm which he had conjured up on the Continent, would brook neither superior nor equal. "His rants," says Horace Walpole, "are amazing; so are his parts and his spirits." He encountered the opposition of his colleagues, not with the fierce haughtiness of the first Pitt, or the cold unbending arrogance of the second, but with a gay vehemence, a good-humoured imperiousness, that bore every thing down before it. The period of his ascendency was known by the name of the "Drunken Administration;" and the expression was not altogether figurative. His habits were extremely convivial; and champagne probably lent its aid to keep

Digitized by Google

him in that state of joyous excitement in which his life was passed.

That a rash and impetuous man of genius like Carteret should not have been able to maintain his ground in Parliament against the crafty and selfish Pelhams is not strange. But it is less easy to understand why he should have been generally unpopular throughout the country. His brilliant talents, his bold and open temper, ought, it should seem, to have made him a favourite with the public. But the people had been bitterly disappointed; and he had to face the first burst of their rage. His close connection with Pulteney, now the most detested man in the nation, was an unfortunate circumstance. He had, indeed, only three partisans, Pulteney, the King, and the Prince of Wales, a most singular assemblage.

He was driven from his office. He shortly after made a bold, indeed a desperate, attempt to recover power. The attempt failed. From that time he relinquished all ambitious hopes, and retired laughing to his books and his bottle. No statesman ever enjoyed success with so exquisite a relish, or submitted to defeat with so genuine and unforced a cheerfulness. Ill as he had been used, he did not seem, says Horace Walpole, to have any resentment, or indeed any feeling except thirst.

These letters contain many good stories, some of them, no doubt, grossly exaggerated, about Lord Carteret; how, in the height of his greatness, he fell in love at first sight on a birthday with Lady Sophia Fermor, the handsome daughter of Lord Pomfret; how he plagued the Cabinet every day with reading to them her ladyship's letters; how strangely he brought home his bride; what fine jewels he gave her; how

Digitized by Google

he fondled her at Ranelagh; and what queen-like state she kept in Arlington Street. Horace Walpole has spoken less bitterly of Carteret than of any public man of that time, Fox perhaps excepted; and this is the more remarkable, because Carteret was one of the most inveterate enemies of Sir Robert. In the Memoirs, Horace Walpole, after passing in review all the great men whom England had produced within his memory, concludes by saying, that in genius none of them equalled Lord Granville. Smollett, in Humphrey Clinker, pronounces a similar judgment in coarser language. "Since Granville was turned out, there has been no minister in this nation worth the meal that whitened his periwig."

Carteret fell; and the reign of the Pelhams commenced. It was Carteret's misfortune to be raised to power when the public mind was still smarting from recent disappointment. The nation had been duped, and was eager for revenge. A victim was necessary, and on such occasions the victims of popular rage are selected like the victim of Jephthah. The first person who comes in the way is made the sacrifice. The wrath of the people had now spent itself; and the unnatural excitement was succeeded by an unnatural calm. To an irrational eagerness for something new, succeeded an equally irrational disposition to acquiesce in every thing established. A few months back the people had been disposed to impute every crime to men in power, and to lend a ready ear to the high professions of men in opposition. They were now disposed to surrender themselves implicitly to the management of Ministers, and to look with suspicion and contempt on all who pretended to public spirit. The name of patriot had become a by-word of derision. Horace Walpole scarce-

Digitized by Google

ly exaggerated when he said that, in those times, the most popular declaration which a candidate could make on the hustings was that he had never been and never would be a patriot. At this conjuncture took place the rebellion of the Highland clans. The alarm produced by that event quieted the strife of internal factions. The suppression of the insurrection crushed for ever the spirit of the Jacobite party. Room was made in the Government for a few Tories. Peace was patched up with France and Spain. Death removed the Prince of Wales, who had contrived to keep together a small portion of that formidable opposition of which he had been the leader in the time of Sir Robert Walpole. Almost every man of weight in the House of Commons was officially connected with the Government. The even tenor of the session of Parliament was ruffled only by an occasional harangue from Lord Egmont on the army estimates. For the first time since the accession of the Stuarts there was no opposition. This singular good fortune, denied to the ablest statesmen, to Salisbury, to Strafford, to Clarendon, to Somers, to Walpole, had been reserved for the Pelhams.

Henry Pelham, it is true, was by no means a contemptible person. His understanding was that of Walpole on a somewhat smaller scale. Though not a brilliant orator, he was, like his master, a good debater, a good parliamentary tactician, a good man of business. Like his master he distinguished himself by the neatness and clearness of his financial expositions. Here the resemblance ceased. Their characters were altogether dissimilar. Walpole was good-humoured, but would have his way: his spirits were high, and his manners frank even to coarseness. The temper of Pelham was yielding, but peevish: his habits were regular, and his

Digitized by Google

deportment strictly decorous. Walpole was constitutionally fearless, Pelham constitutionally timid. Walpole had to face a strong opposition; but no man in the Government durst wag a finger against him. Almost all the opposition which Pelham had to encounter was from members of the Government of which he was the head. His own paymaster spoke against his estimates. His own secretary-at-war spoke against his Regency Bill. In one day Walpole turned Lord Chesterfield, Lord Burlington, and Lord Clinton out of the royal household, dismissed the highest dignitaries of Scotland from their posts, and took away the regiments of the Duke of Bolton and Lord Cobham, because he suspected them of having encouraged the resistance to his Excise Bill. He would far rather have contended with the strongest minority, under the ablest leaders, than have tolerated mutiny in his own party. It would have gone hard with any of his colleagues, who had ventured, on a Government question, to divide the House of Commons against him. Pelham, on the other hand, was disposed to bear any thing rather than drive from office any man round whom a new opposition could form. He therefore endured with fretful patience the insubordination of Pitt and Fox. He thought it far better to connive at their occasional infractions of discipline than to hear them, night after night, thundering against corruption and wicked ministers from the other side of the House.

We wonder that Sir Walter Scott never tried his hand on the Duke of Newcastle. An interview between his Grace and Jeanie Deans would have been delightful, and by no means unnatural. There is scarcely any public man in our history of whose manners and conversation so many particulars have been

Digitized by Google

preserved. Single stories may be unfounded or exaggerated. But all the stories about him, whether told by people who were perpetually seeing him in Parliament and attending his levee in Lincoln's Inn Fields, or by Grub Street writers who never had more than a glimpse of his star through the windows of his gilded coach, are of the same character. Horace Walpole and Smollett differed in their tastes and opinions as much as two human beings could differ. They kept quite different society. Walpole played at cards with countesses, and corresponded with ambassadors. Smollett passed his life surrounded by printer's devils and famished scribblers. Yet Walpole's Duke and Smollett's Duke are as like as if they were both from one hand. Smollett's Newcastle runs out of his dressing-room, with his face covered with soap-suds, to embrace the Moorish envoy. Walpole's Newcastle pushes his way into the Duke of Grafton's sick room to kiss the old nobleman's plasters. No man was so unmercifully satirised. But in truth he was himself a satire ready made. All that the art of the satirist does for other men, nature had done for him. Whatever was absurd about him stood out with grotesque prominence from the rest of the character. He was a living, moving, talking, caricature. His gait was a shuffling trot; his utterance a rapid stutter; he was always in a hurry; he was never in time; he abounded in fulsome caresses and in hysterical tears. His oratory resembled that of Justice Shallow. It was nonsense effervescent with animal spirits and impertinence. Of his ignorance many anecdotes remain, some well authenticated, some probably invented at coffee-houses, but all exquisitely characteristic. "Oh — yes — yes — to be sure — Annapolis must be defended — troops must be

Digitized by Google

sent to Annapolis — Pray where is Annapolis?" — "Cape Breton an island! wonderful! — show it me in the map. So it is, sure enough. My dear sir, you always bring us good news. I must go and tell the King that Cape Breton is an island."

And this man was, during near thirty years, Secretary of State, and, during near ten years, First Lord of the Treasury! His large fortune, his strong hereditary connection, his great parliamentary interest, will not alone explain this extraordinary fact. His success is a signal instance of what may be effected by a man who devotes his whole heart and soul without reserve to one object. He was eaten up by ambition. His love of influence and authority resembled the avarice of the old usurer in the Fortunes of Nigel. It was so intense a passion that it supplied the place of talents, that it inspired even fatuity with cunning. "Have no money dealings with my father," says Martha to Lord Glenvarloch; "for, dotard as he is, he will make an ass of you." It was as dangerous to have any political connection with Newcastle as to buy and sell with old Trapbois. He was greedy after power with a greediness all his own. He was jealous of all his colleagues, and even of his own brother. Under the disguise of levity he was false beyond all example of political falsehood. All the able men of his time ridiculed him as a dunce, a driveller, a child who never knew his own mind for an hour together; and he overreached them all round.

If the country had remained at peace, it is not impossible that this man would have continued at the head of affairs without admitting any other person to a share of his authority until the throne was filled by a new Prince, who brought with him new maxims of

Digitized by Google

government, new favourites, and a strong will. But the inauspicious commencement of the Seven Years' War brought on a crisis to which Newcastle was altogether unequal. After a calm of fifteen years the spirit of the nation was again stirred to its inmost depths. In a few days the whole aspect of the political world was changed.

But that change is too remarkable an event to be discussed at the end of an article already more than sufficiently long. It is probable that we may, at no remote time, resume the subject.

Digitized by Google

WILLIAM PITT, EARL OF CHATHAM.[1]

(*Edinburgh Review*, January, 1834.)

THOUGH several years have elapsed since the publication of this work, it is still, we believe, a new publication to most of our readers. Nor are we surprised at this. The book is large, and the style heavy. The information which Mr. Thackeray has obtained from the State Paper Office is new; but much of it is very uninteresting. The rest of his narrative is very little better than Gifford's or Tomline's Life of the second Pitt, and tells us little or nothing that may not be found quite as well told in the Parliamentary History, the Annual Register, and other works equally common.

Almost every mechanical employment, it is said, has a tendency to injure some one or other of the bodily organs of the artisan. Grinders of cutlery die of consumption; weavers are stunted in their growth; smiths become blear-eyed. In the same manner almost every intellectual employment has a tendency to produce some intellectual malady. Biographers, translators, editors, all, in short, who employ themselves in illus-

[1] *A History of the Right Honourable William Pitt, Earl of Chatham, containing his Speeches in Parliament, a considerable Portion of his Correspondence when Secretary of State, upon French, Spanish, and American Affairs, never before published; and an Account of the principal Events and Persons of his Time, connected with his Life, Sentiments, and Administration.* By the REV. FRANCIS THACKERAY, A. M. 2 vols. 4to. London: 1827.

Digitized by Google

trating the lives or the writings of others, are peculiarly exposed to the *Lues Boswelliana*, or disease of admiration. But we scarcely remember ever to have seen a patient so far gone in this distemper as Mr. Thackeray. He is not satisfied with forcing us to confess that Pitt was a great orator, a vigorous minister, an honourable and high-spirited gentleman. He will have it that all virtues and all accomplishments met in his hero. In spite of Gods, men, and columns, Pitt must be a poet, a poet capable of producing a heroic poem of the first order; and we are assured that we ought to find many charms in such lines as these: —

> "Midst all the tumults of the warring sphere,
> My light-charged bark may haply *glide*;
> Some gale may waft, some conscious thought shall cheer,
> And the small freight unanxious *glids*." [1]

Pitt was in the army for a few months in time of peace. Mr. Thackeray accordingly insists on our confessing that, if the young cornet had remained in the service he would have been one of the ablest commanders that ever lived. But this is not all. Pitt, it seems, was not merely a great poet *in esse*, and a great general *in posse*, but a finished example of moral excellence, the just man made perfect. He was in the right when he attempted to establish an inquisition, and to give bounties for perjury, in order to get Walpole's head. He was in the right when he declared Walpole to have been an excellent minister. He was in the right when, being in opposition, he maintained that no peace ought to be made with Spain, till she should formally renounce the right of search.

[1] The quotation is faithfully made from Mr. Thackeray. Perhaps Pitt wrote *guide* in the fourth line.

Digitized by Google

He was in the right when, being in office, he silently acquiesced in a treaty by which Spain did not renounce the right of search. When he left the Duke of Newcastle, when he coalesced with the Duke of Newcastle, when he thundered against subsidies, when he lavished subsidies with unexampled profusion, when he execrated the Hanoverian connection, when he declared that Hanover ought to be as dear to us as Hampshire, he was still invariably speaking the language of a virtuous and enlightened statesman.

The truth is that there scarcely ever lived a person who had so little claim to this sort of praise as Pitt. He was undoubtedly a great man. But his was not a complete and well-proportioned greatness. The public life of Hampden or of Somers resembles a regular drama, which can be criticised as a whole, and every scene of which is to be viewed in connection with the main action. The public life of Pitt, on the other hand, is a rude though striking piece, a piece abounding in incongruities, a piece without any unity of plan, but redeemed by some noble passages, the effect of which is increased by the tameness or extravagance of what precedes and of what follows. His opinions were unfixed. His conduct at some of the most important conjunctures of his life was evidently determined by pride and resentment. He had one fault, which of all human faults is most rarely found in company with true greatness. He was extremely affected. He was an almost solitary instance of a man of real genius, and of a brave, lofty, and commanding spirit, without simplicity of character. He was an actor in the Closet, an actor at Council, an actor in Parliament; and even in private society he could not lay aside his theatrical tones and attitudes. We know that one of the most

Digitized by Google

distinguished of his partisans often complained that he could never obtain admittance to Lord Chatham's room till every thing was ready for the representation, till the dresses and properties were all correctly disposed, till the light was thrown with Rembrandt-like effect on the head of the illustrious performer, till the flannels had been arranged with the air of a Grecian drapery, and the crutch placed as gracefully as that of Belisarius or Lear.

Yet, with all his faults and affectations, Pitt had, in a very extraordinary degree, many of the elements of greatness. He had genius, strong passions, quick sensibility, and vehement enthusiasm for the grand and the beautiful. There was something about him which ennobled tergiversation itself. He often went wrong, very wrong. But, to quote the language of Wordsworth,

> "He still retained,
> 'Mid such abasement, what he had received
> From nature, an intense and glowing mind."

In an age of low and dirty prostitution, in the age of Dodington and Sandys, it was something to have a man who might perhaps, under some strong excitement, have been tempted to ruin his country, but who never would have stooped to pilfer from her, a man whose errors arose, not from a sordid desire of gain, but from a fierce thirst for power, for glory, and for vengeance. History owes to him this attestation, that, at a time when any thing short of direct embezzlement of the public money was considered as quite fair in public men, he showed the most scrupulous disinterestedness; that, at a time when it seemed to be generally taken for granted that Government could be upheld only by the basest and most immoral arts, he appealed to the better

Digitized by Google

and nobler parts of human nature; that he made a brave and splendid attempt to do, by means of public opinion, what no other statesman of his day thought it possible to do, except by means of corruption; that he looked for support, not, like the Pelhams, to a strong aristocratical connection, not, like Bute, to the personal favour of the sovereign, but to the middle class of Englishmen; that he inspired that class with a firm confidence in his integrity and ability; that, backed by them, he forced an unwilling court and an unwilling oligarchy to admit him to an ample share of power; and that he used his power in such a manner as clearly proved him to have sought it, not for the sake of profit or patronage, but from a wish to establish for himself a great and durable reputation by means of eminent services rendered to the state.

The family of Pitt was wealthy and respectable. His grandfather was Governor of Madras, and brought back from India that celebrated diamond, which the Regent Orleans, by the advice of Saint Simon, purchased for upwards of two millions of livres, and which is still considered as the most precious of the crown jewels of France. Governor Pitt bought estates and rotten boroughs, and sat in the House of Commons for Old Sarum. His son Robert was at one time member for Old Sarum, and at another for Oakhampton. Robert had two sons. Thomas, the elder, inherited the estates and the parliamentary interest of his father. The second was the celebrated William Pitt.

He was born in November, 1708. About the early part of his life little more is known than that he was educated at Eton, and that at seventeen he was entered at Trinity College, Oxford. During the second year of his residence at the University, George the

Digitized by Google

First died; and the event was, after the fashion of that generation, celebrated by the Oxonians in many middling copies of verses. On this occasion Pitt published some Latin lines, which Mr. Thackeray has preserved. They prove that the young student had but a very limited knowledge even of the mechanical part of his art. All true Etonians will hear with concern that their illustrious schoolfellow is guilty of making the first syllable in *labenti* short.[1] The matter of the poem is as worthless as that of any college exercise that was ever written before or since. There is, of course, much about Mars, Themis, Neptune, and Cocytus. The muses are earnestly entreated to weep over the urn of Cæsar; for Cæsar, says the Poet, loved the Muses; Cæsar, who could not read a line of Pope, and who loved nothing but punch and fat women.

Pitt had been, from his school-days, cruelly tormented by the gout, and was advised to travel for his health. He accordingly left Oxford without taking a degree, and visited France and Italy. He returned, however, without having received much benefit from his excursion, and continued, till the close of his life, to suffer most severely from his constitutional malady.

His father was now dead, and had left very little to the younger children. It was necessary that William should choose a profession. He decided for the army, and a cornet's commission was procured for him in the Blues.

But, small as his fortune was, his family had both the power and the inclination to serve him. At the general election of 1734, his elder brother Thomas was

[1] So Mr. Thackeray has printed the poem. But it may be charitably hoped that Pitt wrote *labanti*.

Digitized by Google

chosen both for Old Sarum and for Oakhampton. When Parliament met in 1735, Thomas made his election to serve for Oakhampton, and William was returned for Old Sarum.

Walpole had now been, during fourteen years, at the head of affairs. He had risen to power under the most favorable circumstances. The whole of the Whig party, of that party which professed peculiar attachment to the principles of the Revolution, and which exclusively enjoyed the confidence of the reigning house, had been united in support of his administration. Happily for him, he had been out of office when the South-Sea Act was passed; and though he does not appear to have foreseen all the consequences of that measure, he had strenuously opposed it, as he had opposed all the measures, good and bad, of Sunderland's administration. When the South-Sea Company were voting dividends of fifty per cent., when a hundred pounds of their stock were selling for eleven hundred pounds, when Threadneedle Street was daily crowded with the coaches of dukes and prelates, when divines and philosophers turned gamblers, when a thousand kindred bubbles were daily blown into existence, the periwig-company, and the Spanish-jackass-company, and the quicksilver-fixation-company, Walpole's calm good sense preserved him from the general infatuation. He condemned the prevailing madness in public, and turned a considerable sum by taking advantage of it in private. When the crash came, when ten thousand families were reduced to beggary in a day, when the people, in the frenzy of their rage and despair, clamoured, not only against the lower agents in the juggle, but against the Hanoverian favourites, against the English ministers, against the King himself, when Parliament met,

Digitized by Google

eager for confiscation and blood, when members of the House of Commons proposed that the directors should be treated like parricides in ancient Rome, tied up in sacks, and thrown into the Thames, Walpole was the man on whom all parties turned their eyes. Four years before he had been driven from power by the intrigues of Sunderland and Stanhope; and the lead in the House of Commons had been intrusted to Craggs and Aislabie. Stanhope was no more. Aislabie was expelled from Parliament on account of his disgraceful conduct regarding the South-Sea scheme. Craggs was perhaps saved by a timely death from a similar mark of infamy. A large minority in the House of Commons voted for a severe censure on Sunderland, who, finding it impossible to withstand the force of the prevailing sentiment, retired from office, and outlived his retirement but a very short time. The schism which had divided the Whig party was now completely healed. Walpole had no opposition to encounter except that of the Tories; and the Tories were naturally regarded by the King with the strongest suspicion and dislike.

For a time business went on with a smoothness and a despatch such as had not been known since the days of the Tudors. During the session of 1724, for example, there was hardly a single division except on private bills. It is not impossible that, by taking the course which Pelham afterwards took, by admitting into the government all the rising talents and ambition of the Whig party, and by making room here and there for a Tory not unfriendly to the House of Brunswick, Walpole might have averted the tremendous conflict in which he passed the later years of his administration, and in which he was at length vanquished. The Opposition which overthrew him was an Opposi-

Digitized by Google

tion created by his own policy, by his own insatiable love of power.

In the very act of forming his Ministry he turned one of the ablest and most attached of his supporters into a deadly enemy. Pulteney had strong public and private claims to a high situation in the new arrangement. His fortune was immense. His private character was respectable. He was already a distinguished speaker. He had acquired official experience in an important post. He had been, through all changes of fortune, a consistent Whig. When the Whig party was split into two sections, Pulteney had resigned a valuable place, and had followed the fortunes of Walpole. Yet, when Walpole returned to power, Pulteney was not invited to take office. An angry discussion took place between the friends. The Ministry offered a peerage. It was impossible for Pulteney not to discern the motive of such an offer. He indignantly refused to accept it. For some time he continued to brood over his wrongs, and to watch for an opportunity of revenge. As soon as a favourable conjuncture arrived he joined the minority, and became the greatest leader of Opposition that the House of Commons had ever seen.

Of all the members of the Cabinet Carteret was the most eloquent and accomplished. His talents for debate were of the first order; his knowledge of foreign affairs was superior to that of any living statesman; his attachment to the Protestant succession was undoubted. But there was not room in one Government for him and Walpole. Carteret retired, and was, from that time forward, one of the most persevering and formidable enemies of his old colleague.

If there was any man with whom Walpole could

Digitized by Google

have consented to make a partition of power, that man was Lord Townshend. They were distant kinsmen by birth, near kinsmen by marriage. They had been friends from childhood. They had been schoolfellows at Eton. They were country neighbors in Norfolk. They had been in office together under Godolphin. They had gone into opposition together when Harley rose to power. They had been persecuted by the same House of Commons. They had, after the death of Anne, been recalled together to office. They had again been driven out together by Sunderland, and had again come back together when the influence of Sunderland had declined. Their opinions on public affairs almost always coincided. They were both men of frank, generous, and compassionate natures. Their intercourse had been for many years affectionate and cordial. But the ties of blood, of marriage, and of friendship, the memory of mutual services, the memory of common triumphs and common disasters, were insufficient to restrain that ambition which domineered over all the virtues and vices of Walpole. He was resolved, to use his own metaphor, that the firm of the house should be, not Townshend and Walpole, but Walpole and Townshend. At length the rivals proceeded to personal abuse before a large company, seized each other by the collar, and grasped their swords. The women squalled. The men parted the combatants. By friendly intervention the scandal of a duel between cousins, brothers-in-law, old friends, and old colleagues, was prevented. But the disputants could not long continue to act together. Townshend retired, and, with rare moderation and public spirit, refused to take any part in politics. He could not, he said, trust his temper. He feared that the recollection of his private wrongs might impel him

Digitized by Google

to follow the example of Pulteney, and to oppose measures which he thought generally beneficial to the country. He therefore never visited London after his resignation, but passed the closing years of his life in dignity and repose among his trees and pictures at Rainham.

Next went Chesterfield. He too was a Whig and a friend of the Protestant succession. He was an orator, a courtier, a wit, and a man of letters. He was at the head of *ton* in days when, in order to be at the head of *ton*, it was not sufficient to be dull and supercilious. It was evident that he submitted impatiently to the ascendency of Walpole. He murmured against the Excise Bill. His brothers voted against it in the House of Commons. The Minister acted with characteristic caution and characteristic energy; caution in the conduct of public affairs; energy where his own supremacy was concerned. He withdrew his Bill, and turned out all his hostile or wavering colleagues. Chesterfield was stopped on the great staircase of St. James's and summoned to deliver up the staff which he bore as Lord Steward of the Household. A crowd of noble and powerful functionaries, the Dukes of Montrose and Bolton, Lord Burlington, Lord Stair, Lord Cobham, Lord Marchmont, Lord Clinton, were at the same time dismissed from the service of the Crown.

Not long after these events the Opposition was reinforced by the Duke of Argyle, a man vainglorious indeed and fickle, but brave, eloquent, and popular. It was in a great measure owing to his exertions that the Act of Settlement had been peaceably carried into effect in England immediately after the death of Anne, and that the Jacobite rebellion which, during the following year, broke out in Scotland, had been suppressed. He too carried over to the minority the aid of his great

Digitized by Google

name, his talents, and his paramount influence in his native country.

In each of these cases taken separately, a skilful defender of Walpole might perhaps make out a case for him. But when we see that during a long course of years all the footsteps are turned the same way, that all the most eminent of those public men who agreed with the Minister in their general views of policy left him, one after another, with sore and irritated minds, we find it impossible not to believe that the real explanation of the phænomenon is to be found in the words of his son, "Sir Robert Walpole loved power so much that he would not endure a rival." Hume has described this famous minister with great felicity in one short sentence, — "moderate in exercising power, not equitable in engrossing it." Kind-hearted, jovial, and placable as Walpole was, he was yet a man with whom no person of high pretensions and high spirit could long continue to act. He had, therefore, to stand against an Opposition containing all the most accomplished statesmen of the age, with no better support than that which he received from persons like his brother Horace or Henry Pelham, whose industrious mediocrity gave no cause for jealousy, or from clever adventurers, whose situation and character diminished the dread which their talents might have inspired. To this last class belonged Fox, who was too poor to live without office; Sir William Yonge, of whom Walpole himself said, that nothing but such parts could buoy up such a character, and that nothing but such a character could drag down such parts; and Winnington, whose private morals lay, justly or unjustly, under imputations of the worst kind.

The discontented Whigs were, not perhaps in num-

Digitized by Google

ber, but certainly in ability, experience, and weight, by far the most important part of the Opposition. The Tories furnished little more than rows of ponderous foxhunters, fat with Staffordshire or Devonshire ale, men who drank to the King over the water, and believed that all the fundholders were Jews, men whose religion consisted in hating the Dissenters, and whose political researches had led them to fear, like Squire Western, that their land might be sent over to Hanover to be put in the sinking-fund. The eloquence of these zealous squires, the remnant of the once formidable October Club, seldom went beyond a hearty Aye or No. Very few members of this party had distinguished themselves much in Parliament, or could, under any circumstances, have been called to fill any high office; and those few had generally, like Sir William Wyndham, learned in the company of their new associates the doctrines of toleration and political liberty, and might indeed with strict propriety be called Whigs.

It was to the Whigs in Opposition, the Patriots, as they were called, that the most distinguished of the English youth who at this season entered into public life attached themselves. These inexperienced politicians felt all the enthusiasm which the name of liberty naturally excites in young and ardent minds. They conceived that the theory of the Tory Opposition and the practice of Walpole's Government were alike inconsistent with the principles of liberty. They accordingly repaired to the standard which Pulteney had set up. While opposing the Whig minister, they professed a firm adherence to the purest doctrines of Whiggism. He was the schismatic; they were the true Catholics, the peculiar people, the depositaries

Digitized by Google

of the orthodox faith of Hampden and Russell, the one sect which, amidst the corruptions generated by time and by the long possession of power, had preserved inviolate the principles of the Revolution. Of the young men who attached themselves to this portion of the Opposition the most distinguished were Lyttelton and Pitt.

When Pitt entered Parliament, the whole political world was attentively watching the progress of an event which soon added great strength to the Opposition, and particularly to that section of the Opposition in which the young statesman enrolled himself. The Prince of Wales was gradually becoming more and more estranged from his father and his father's ministers, and more and more friendly to the Patriots.

Nothing is more natural than that, in a monarchy where a constitutional Opposition exists, the heir-apparent of the throne should put himself at the head of that Opposition. He is impelled to such a course by every feeling of ambition and of vanity. He cannot be more than second in the estimation of the party which is in. He is sure to be the first member of the party which is out. The highest favour which the existing administration can expect from him is that he will not discard them. But, if he joins the Opposition, all his associates expect that he will promote them; and the feelings which men entertain towards one from whom they hope to obtain great advantages which they have not are far warmer than the feelings with which they regard one who, at the very utmost, can only leave them in possession of what they already have. An heir-apparent, therefore, who wishes to enjoy, in the highest perfection, all the pleasure that can be derived from eloquent flattery and profound respect, will always join those

Digitized by Google

who are struggling to force themselves into power. This is, we believe, the true explanation of a fact which Lord Granville attributed to some natural peculiarity in the illustrious House of Brunswick. "This family," said he at Council, we suppose after his daily half-gallon of Burgundy, "always has quarrelled, and always will quarrel, from generation to generation." He should have known something of the matter; for he had been a favourite with three successive generations of the royal house. We cannot quite admit his explanation; but the fact is indisputable. Since the accession of George the First, there have been four Princes of Wales, and they have all been almost constantly in Opposition.

Whatever might have been the motives which induced Prince Frederic to join the party opposed to the government, his support infused into many members of that party a courage and an energy of which they stood greatly in need. Hitherto it had been impossible for the discontented Whigs not to feel some misgivings when they found themselves dividing, night after night, with uncompromising Jacobites who were known to be in constant communication with the exiled family, or with Tories who had impeached Somers, who had murmured against Harley and St. John as too remiss in the cause of the Church and the landed interest, and who, if they were not inclined to attack the reigning family, yet considered the introduction of that family as, at best, only the less of two great evils, as a necessary but painful and humiliating preservative against Popery. The Minister might plausibly say that Pulteney and Carteret, in the hope of gratifying their own appetite for office and for revenge, did not scruple to serve the purposes of a faction hostile to the Protestant

Digitized by Google

succession. The appearance of Frederic at the head of the patriots silenced this reproach. The leaders of the Opposition might now boast that their course was sanctioned by a person as deeply interested as the King himself in maintaining the Act of Settlement, and that, instead of serving the purposes of the Tory party, they had brought that party over to the side of Whiggism. It must indeed be admitted that, though both the King and the Prince behaved in a manner little to their honour, though the father acted harshly, the son disrespectfully, and both childishly, the royal family was rather strengthened than weakened by the disagreement of its two most distinguished members. A large class of politicians, who had considered themselves as placed under sentence of perpetual exclusion from office, and who, in their despair, had been almost ready to join in a counter-revolution as the only mode of removing the proscription under which they lay, now saw with pleasure an easier and safer road to power opening before them, and thought it far better to wait till, in the natural course of things, the Crown should descend to the heir of the House of Brunswick, than to risk their lands and their necks in a rising for the House of Stuart. The situation of the royal family resembled the situation of those Scotch families in which father and son took opposite sides during the rebellion, in order that, come what might, the estate might not be forfeited.

In April, 1736, Frederic was married to the Princess of Saxe Gotha, with whom he afterwards lived on terms very similar to those on which his father had lived with Queen Caroline. The Prince adored his wife, and thought her in mind and person the most attractive of her sex. But he thought that conjugal

Digitized by Google

fidelity was an unprincely virtue; and, in order to be like Henry the Fourth, and the Regent Orleans, he affected a libertinism for which he had no taste, and frequently quitted the only woman whom he loved for ugly and disagreeable mistresses.

The address which the House of Commons presented to the King on the occasion of the Prince's marriage was moved, not by the Minister, but by Pulteney, the leader of the Whigs in Opposition. It was on this motion that Pitt, who had not broken silence during the session in which he took his seat, addressed the House for the first time. "A contemporary historian," says Mr. Thackeray, "describes Mr. Pitt's first speech as superior even to the models of ancient eloquence. According to Tindal, it was more ornamented than the speeches of Demosthenes, and less diffuse than those of Cicero." This unmeaning phrase has been a hundred times quoted. That it should ever have been quoted, except to be laughed at, is strange. The vogue which it has obtained may serve to show in how slovenly a way most people are content to think. Did Tindal, who first used it, or Archdeacon Coxe and Mr. Thackeray, who have borrowed it, ever in their lives hear any speaking which did not deserve the same compliment? Did they ever hear speaking less ornamented than that of Demosthenes, or more diffuse than that of Cicero? We know no living orator, from Lord Brougham down to Mr. Hunt, who is not entitled to the same eulogy. It would be no very flattering compliment to a man's figure to say, that he was taller than the Polish Count, and shorter than Giant O'Brien, fatter than the *Anatomie Vivante*, and more slender than Daniel Lambert.

Digitized by Google

Pitt's speech, as it is reported in the Gentleman's Magazine, certainly deserves Tindal's compliment, and deserves no other. It is just as empty and wordy as a maiden speech on such an occasion might be expected to be. But the fluency and the personal advantages of the young orator instantly caught the ear and eye of his audience. He was, from the day of his first appearance, always heard with attention; and exercise soon developed the great powers which he possessed.

In our time, the audience of a member of Parliament is the nation. The three or four hundred persons who may be present while a speech is delivered may be pleased or disgusted by the voice and action of the orator; but, in the reports which are read the next day by hundreds of thousands, the difference between the noblest and the meanest figure, between the richest and the shrillest tones, between the most graceful and the most uncouth gesture, altogether vanishes. A hundred years ago, scarcely any report of what passed within the walls of the House of Commons was suffered to get abroad. In those times, therefore, the impression which a speaker might make on the persons who actually heard him was every thing. His fame out of doors depended entirely on the report of those who were within the doors. In the Parliaments of that time, therefore, as in the ancient commonwealths, those qualifications which enhance the immediate effect of a speech, were far more important ingredients in the composition of an orator than at present. All those qualifications Pitt possessed in the highest degree. On the stage, he would have been the finest Brutus or Coriolanus ever seen. Those who saw him in his decay, when his health was broken, when his

Digitized by Google

mind was untuned, when he had been removed from that stormy assembly of which he thoroughly knew the temper, and over which he possessed unbounded influence, to a small, a torpid, and an unfriendly audience, say that his speaking was then, for the most part, a low, monotonous muttering, audible only to those who sat close to him, that when violently excited, he sometimes raised his voice for a few minutes, but that it soon sank again into an unintelligible murmur. Such was the Earl of Chatham; but such was not William Pitt. His figure, when he first appeared in Parliament, was strikingly graceful and commanding, his features high and noble, his eye full of fire. His voice, even when it sank to a whisper, was heard to the remotest benches; and when he strained it to its full extent, the sound rose like the swell of the organ of a great cathedral, shook the house with its peal, and was heard through lobbies and down staircases, to the Court of Requests and the precincts of Westminster Hall. He cultivated all these eminent advantages with the most assiduous care. His action is described by a very malignant observer as equal to that of Garrick. His play of countenance was wonderful: he frequently disconcerted a hostile orator by a single glance of indignation or scorn. Every tone, from the impassioned cry to the thrilling aside, was perfectly at his command. It is by no means improbable that the pains which he took to improve his great personal advantages had, in some respects, a prejudicial operation, and tended to nourish in him that passion for theatrical effect which, as we have already remarked, was one of the most conspicuous blemishes in his character.

But it was not solely or principally to outward accomplishments that Pitt owed the vast influence

Digitized by Google

which, during nearly thirty years, he exercised over the House of Commons. He was undoubtedly a great orator; and, from the descriptions given by his contemporaries, and the fragments of his speeches which still remain, it is not difficult to discover the nature and extent of his oratorical powers.

He was no speaker of set speeches. His few prepared discourses were complete failures. The elaborate panegyric which he pronounced on General Wolfe was considered as the very worst of all his performances. "No man," says a critic who had often heard him, "ever knew so little what he was going to say." Indeed his facility amounted to a vice. He was not the master, but the slave of his own speech. So little self-command had he when once he felt the impulse, that he did not like to take part in a debate when his mind was full of an important secret of state. "I must sit still," he once said to Lord Shelburne on such an occasion; "for, when once I am up, every thing that is in my mind comes out."

Yet he was not a great debater. That he should not have been so when first he entered the House of Commons is not strange. Scarcely any person has ever become so without long practice and many failures. It was by slow degrees, as Burke said, that Charles Fox became the most brilliant and powerful debater that ever lived. Charles Fox himself attributed his own success to the resolution which he formed when very young, of speaking, well or ill, at least once every night. "During five whole sessions," he used to say, "I spoke every night but one; and I regret only that I did not speak on that night too." Indeed, with the exception of Mr. Stanley, whose knowledge of the science of parliamentary defence resembles an

Digitized by Google

instinct, it would be difficult to name any eminent debater who had not made himself a master of his art at the expense of his audience.

But, as this art is one which even the ablest men have seldom acquired without long practice, so it is one which men of respectable abilities, with assiduous and intrepid practice, seldom fail to acquire. It is singular that, in such an art, Pitt, a man of great parts, of great fluency, of great boldness, a man whose whole life was passed in parlimentary conflict, a man who, during several years was the leading minister of the Crown in the House of Commons, should never have attained to high excellence. He spoke without premeditation; but his speech followed the course of his own thoughts, and not the course of the previous discussion. He could, indeed, treasure up in his memory some detached expression of an opponent, and make it the text for lively ridicule or solemn reprehension. Some of the most celebrated bursts of his eloquence were called forth by an unguarded word, a laugh, or a cheer. But this was the only sort of reply in which he appears to have excelled. He was perhaps the only great English orator who did not think it any advantage to have the last word, and who generally spoke by choice before his most formidable antagonists. His merit was almost entirely rhetorical. He did not succeed either in exposition or in refutation; but his speeches abounded in lively illustrations, striking apophthegms, well told anecdotes, happy allusions, passionate appeals. His invective and sarcasm were terrific. Perhaps no English orator was ever so much feared.

But that which gave most effect to his declamation was the air of sincerity, of vehement feeling, of moral

Digitized by Google

elevation, which belonged to all that he said. His style was not always in the purest taste. Several contemporary judges pronounced it too florid. Walpole, in the midst of the rapturous eulogy which he pronounces on one of Pitt's greatest orations, owns that some of the metaphors were too forced. Some of Pitt's quotations and classical stories are too trite for a clever schoolboy. But these were niceties for which the audience cared little. The enthusiasm of the orator infected all who heard him; his ardour and his noble bearing put fire into the most frigid conceit, and gave dignity to the most puerile allusion.

His powers soon began to give annoyance to the Government; and Walpole determined to make an example of the patriotic cornet. Pitt was accordingly dismissed from the service. Mr. Thackeray says that the Minister took this step, because he plainly saw that it would have been vain to think of buying over so honourable and disinterested an opponent. We do not dispute Pitt's integrity; but we do not know what proof he had given of it when he was turned out of the army; and we are sure that Walpole was not likely to give credit for inflexible honesty to a young adventurer, who had never had an opportunity of refusing any thing. The truth is, that it was not Walpole's practice to buy off enemies. Mr. Burke truly says, in the Appeal to the Old Whigs, that Walpole gained very few over from the Opposition. Indeed that great minister knew his business far too well. He knew that, for one mouth which is stopped with a place, fifty other mouths will be instantly opened. He knew that it would have been very bad policy in him to give the world to understand that more was to be got by thwarting his measures than by supporting them.

Digitized by Google

These maxims are as old as the origin of parliamentary corruption in England. Pepys learned them, as he tells us, from the counsellors of Charles the Second.

Pitt was no loser. He was made Groom of the Bedchamber to the Prince of Wales, and continued to declaim against the ministers with unabated violence and with increasing ability. The question of maritime right, then agitated between Spain and England, called forth all his powers. He clamoured for war with a vehemence which it is not easy to reconcile with reason or humanity, but which appears to Mr. Thackeray worthy of the highest admiration. We will not stop to argue a point on which we had long thought that all well-informed people were agreed. We could easily show, we think, that if any respect be due to international law, if right, where societies of men are concerned, be any thing but another name for might, if we do not adopt the doctrine of the Buccaniers, which seems to be also the doctrine of Mr. Thackeray, that treaties mean nothing within thirty degrees of the line, the war with Spain was altogether unjustifiable. But the truth is, that the promoters of that war have saved the historian the trouble of trying them. They have pleaded guilty. "I have seen," says Burke, "and with some care examined, the original documents concerning certain important transactions of those times. They perfectly satisfied me of the extreme injustice of that war, and of the falsehood of the colours which Walpole, to his ruin, and guided by a mistaken policy, suffered to be daubed over that measure. Some years after, it was my fortune to converse with many of the principal actors against that minister, and with those who principally excited that clamour. None of them, no not one, did in the least defend the measure, or

Digitized by Google

attempt to justify their conduct. They condemned it as freely as they would have done in commenting upon any proceeding in history in which they were totally unconcerned." Pitt, on subsequent occasions, gave ample proof that he was one of these penitents. But his conduct, even where it appeared most criminal to himself, appears admirable to his biographer.

The elections of 1741 were unfavourable to Walpole; and after a long and obstinate struggle he found it necessary to resign. The Duke of Newcastle and Lord Hardwicke opened a negotiation with the leading patriots, in the hope of forming an administration on a Whig basis. At this conjuncture, Pitt and those persons who were most nearly connected with him acted in a manner very little to their honour. They attempted to come to an understanding with Walpole, and offered, if he would use his influence with the King in their favour, to screen him from prosecution. They even went so far as to engage for the concurrence of the Prince of Wales. But Walpole knew that the assistance of the Boys, as he called the young Patriots, would avail him nothing if Pulteney and Carteret should prove intractable, and would be superfluous if the great leaders of the Opposition could be gained. He, therefore, declined the proposal. It is remarkable that Mr. Thackeray, who has thought it worth while to preserve Pitt's bad college verses, has not even alluded to this story, a story which is supported by strong testimony, and which may be found in so common a book as Coxe's Life of Walpole.

The new arrangements disappointed almost every member of the Opposition, and none more than Pitt. He was not invited to become a placeman; and he

Digitized by Google

therefore stuck firmly to his old trade of patriot. Fortunate it was for him that he did so. Had he taken office at this time, he would in all probability have shared largely in the unpopularity of Pulteney, Sandys, and Carteret. He was now the fiercest and most implacable of those who called for vengeance on Walpole. He spoke with great energy and ability in favour of the most unjust and violent propositions which the enemies of the fallen minister could invent. He urged the House of Commons to appoint a secret tribunal for the purpose of investigating the conduct of the late First Lord of the Treasury. This was done. The great majority of the inquisitors were notoriously hostile to the accused statesman. Yet they were compelled to own that they could find no fault in him. They therefore called for new powers, for a bill of indemnity to witnesses, or, in plain words, for a bill to reward all who might give evidence, true or false, against the Earl of Orford. This bill Pitt supported, Pitt, who had himself offered to be a screen between Lord Orford and public justice. These are melancholy facts. Mr. Thackeray omits them, or hurries over them as fast as he can; and, as eulogy is his business, he is in the right to do so. But, though there are many parts of the life of Pitt which it is more agreeable to contemplate, we know none more instructive. What must have been the general state of political morality, when a young man, considered, and justly considered, as the most public-spirited and spotless statesman of his time, could attempt to force his way into office by means so disgraceful!

The Bill of Indemnity was rejected by the Lords. Walpole withdrew himself quietly from the public eye; and the ample space which he had left vacant was soon

Digitized by Google

occupied by Carteret. Against Carteret Pitt began to thunder with as much zeal as he had ever manifested against Sir Robert. To Carteret he transferred most of the hard names which were familiar to his eloquence, sole minister, wicked minister, odious minister, execrable minister. The chief topic of Pitt's invective was the favour shown to the German dominions of the House of Brunswick. He attacked with great violence, and with an ability which raised him to the very first rank among the parliamentary speakers, the practice of paying Hanoverian troops with English money. The House of Commons had lately lost some of its most distinguished ornaments. Walpole and Pulteney had accepted peerages; Sir William Wyndham was dead; and among the rising men none could be considered as, on the whole, a match for Pitt.

During the recess of 1744, the old Duchess of Marlborough died. She carried to her grave the reputation of being decidedly the best hater of her time. Yet her love had been infinitely more destructive than her hatred. More than thirty years before, her temper had ruined the party to which she belonged and the husband whom she adored. Time had made her neither wiser nor kinder. Whoever was at any moment great and prosperous was the object of her fiercest detestation. She had hated Walpole; she now hated Carteret. Pope, long before her death, predicted the fate of her vast property.

> "To heirs unknown descends the unguarded store,
> Or wanders, heaven-directed, to the poor."

Pitt was then one of the poor; and to him Heaven directed a portion of the wealth of the haughty Dowager. She left him a legacy of ten thousand pounds, in consideration of "the noble defence he had made

Digitized by Google

for the support of the laws of England, and to prevent the ruin of his country."

The will was made in August. The Duchess died in October. In November Pitt was a courtier. The Pelhams had forced the King, much against his will, to part with Lord Carteret, who had now become Earl Granville. They proceeded, after this victory, to form the Government on that basis, called by the cant name of "the broad bottom." Lyttelton had a seat at the Treasury, and several other friends of Pitt were provided for. But Pitt himself was, for the present, forced to be content with promises. The King resented most highly some expression which the ardent orator had used in the debate on the Hanoverian troops. But Newcastle and Pelham expressed the strongest confidence that time and their exertions would soften the royal displeasure.

Pitt, on his part, omitted nothing that might facilitate his admission to office. He resigned his place in the household of Prince Frederic, and, when Parliament met, exerted his eloquence in support of the Government. The Pelhams were really sincere in their endeavours to remove the strong prejudices which had taken root in the King's mind. They knew that Pitt was not a man to be deceived with ease or offended with impunity. They were afraid that they should not be long able to put him off with promises. Nor was it their interest so to put him off. There was a strong tie between him and them. He was the enemy of their enemy. The brothers hated and dreaded the eloquent, aspiring, and imperious Granville. They had traced his intrigues in many quarters. They knew his influence over the royal mind. They knew that, as soon as a favourable opportunity should arrive,

Digitized by Google

he would be recalled to the head of affairs. They resolved to bring things to a crisis; and the question on which they took issue with their master was, whether Pitt should or should not be admitted to office. They chose their time with more skill than generosity. It was when rebellion was actually raging in Britain, when the Pretender was master of the northern extremity of the island, that they tendered their resignations. The King found himself deserted, in one day, by the whole strength of that party which had placed his family on the throne. Lord Granville tried to form a government; but it soon appeared that the parliamentary interest of the Pelhams was irresistible, and that the King's favourite statesman could count only on about thirty Lords and eighty members of the House of Commons. The scheme was given up. Granville went away laughing. The ministers came back stronger than ever; and the King was now no longer able to refuse any thing that they might be pleased to demand. He could only mutter that it was very hard that Newcastle, who was not fit to be chamberlain to the most insignificant prince in Germany, should dictate to the King of England.

One concession the ministers graciously made. They agreed that Pitt should not be placed in a situation in which it would be necessary for him to have frequent interviews with the King. Instead, therefore, of making their new ally Secretary-at-War as they had intended, they appointed him Vice-Treasurer of Ireland, and in a few months promoted him to the office of Paymaster of the Forces.

This was, at that time, one of the most lucrative offices in the Government. The salary was but a small part of the emolument which the Paymaster derived

Digitized by Google

from his place. He was allowed to keep a large sum, which, even in time of peace, was seldom less than one hundred thousand pounds, constantly in his hands; and the interest on this sum he might appropriate to his own use. This practice was not secret, nor was it considered as disreputable. It was the practice of men of undoubted honour, both before and after the time of Pitt. He, however, refused to accept one farthing beyond the salary which the law had annexed to his office. It had been usual for foreign princes who received the pay of England to give to the Paymaster of the Forces a small per centage on the subsidies. These ignominious vails Pitt resolutely declined.

Disinterestedness of this kind was, in his days, very rare. His conduct surprised and amused politicians. It excited the warmest admiration throughout the body of the people. In spite of the inconsistencies of which Pitt had been guilty, in spite of the strange contrast between his violence in Opposition and his tameness in office, he still possessed a large share of the public confidence. The motives which may lead a politician to change his connections or his general line of conduct are often obscure; but disinterestedness in pecuniary matters everybody can understand. Pitt was thenceforth considered as a man who was proof to all sordid temptations. If he acted ill, it might be from an error in judgment; it might be from resentment; it might be from ambition. But poor as he was, he had vindicated himself from all suspicion of covetousness.

Eight quiet years followed, eight years during which the minority, which had been feeble ever since Lord Granville had been overthrown, continued to dwindle till it became almost invisible. Peace was made with France and Spain in 1748. Prince Frederic died in

Digitized by Google

1751; and with him died the very semblance of opposition. All the most distinguished survivors of the party which had supported Walpole and of the party which had opposed him were united under his successor. The fiery and vehement spirit of Pitt had for a time been laid to rest. He silently acquiesced in that very system of continental measures which he had lately condemned. He ceased to talk disrespectfully about Hanover. He did not object to the treaty with Spain, though that treaty left us exactly where we had been when he uttered his spirit-stirring harangues against the pacific policy of Walpole. Now and then glimpses of his former self appeared; but they were few and transient. Pelham knew with whom he had to deal, and felt that an ally, so little used to control, and so capable of inflicting injury, might well be indulged in an occasional fit of waywardness.

Two men, little, if at all, inferior to Pitt in powers of mind, held, like him, subordinate offices in the Government. One of these, Murray, was successively Solicitor-General and Attorney-General. This distinguished person far surpassed Pitt in correctness of taste, in power of reasoning, in depth and variety of knowledge. His parliamentary eloquence never blazed into sudden flashes of dazzling brilliancy; but its clear, placid, and mellow splendour was never for an instant overclouded. Intellectually he was, we believe, fully equal to Pitt; but he was deficient in the moral qualities to which Pitt owed most of his success. Murray wanted the energy, the courage, the all-grasping and all-risking ambition, which make men great in stirring times. His heart was a little cold, his temper cautious even to timidity, his manners decorous even to formality. He never exposed his fortunes or his fame to any

Digitized by Google

risk which he could avoid. At one time he might, in all probability, have been Prime Minister. But the object of his wishes was the judicial bench. The situation of Chief Justice might not be so splendid as that of First Lord of the Treasury; but it was dignified; it was quiet; it was secure; and therefore it was the favourite situation of Murray.

Fox, the father of the great man whose mighty efforts in the cause of peace, of truth, and of liberty, have made that name immortal, was Secretary-at-War. He was a favourite with the King, with the Duke of Cumberland, and with some of the most powerful members of the great Whig connection. His parliamentary talents were of the highest order. As a speaker he was in almost all respects the very opposite to Pitt. His figure was ungraceful; his face, as Reynolds and Nollekens have preserved it to us, indicated a strong understanding; but the features were coarse, and the general aspect dark and lowering. His manner was awkward; his delivery was hesitating; he was often at a stand for want of a word; but as a debater, as a master of that keen, weighty, manly logic, which is suited to the discussion of political questions, he has perhaps never been surpassed except by his son. In reply he was as decidedly superior to Pitt as in declamation he was Pitt's inferior. Intellectually the balance was nearly even between the rivals. But here, again, the moral qualities of Pitt turned the scale. Fox had undoubtedly many virtues. In natural disposition as well as in talents, he bore a great resemblance to his more celebrated son. He had the same sweetness of temper, the same strong passions, the same openness, boldness, and impetuosity, the same cordiality towards friends, the same placability towards enemies. No man

Digitized by Google

was more warmly or justly beloved by his family or by his associates. But unhappily he had been trained in a bad political school, in a school, the doctrines of which were, that political virtue is the mere coquetry of political prostitution, that every patriot has his price, that Government can be carried on only by means of corruption, and that the state is given as a prey to statesmen. These maxims were too much in vogue throughout the lower ranks of Walpole's party, and were too much encouraged by Walpole himself, who, from contempt of what is in our day vulgarly called *humbug*, often ran extravagantly and offensively into the opposite extreme. The loose political morality of Fox presented a remarkable contrast to the ostentatious purity of Pitt. The nation distrusted the former, and placed implicit confidence in the latter. But almost all the statesmen of the age had still to learn that the confidence of the nation was worth having. While things went on quietly, while there was no opposition, while every thing was given by the favour of a small ruling junto, Fox had a decided advantage over Pitt; but when dangerous times came, when Europe was convulsed with war, when Parliament was broken up into factions, when the public mind was violently excited, the favourite of the people rose to supreme power, while his rival sank into insignificance.

Early in the year 1754 Henry Pelham died unexpectedly. "Now I shall have no more peace," exclaimed the old King, when he heard the news. He was in the right. Pelham had succeeded in bringing together and keeping together all the talents of the kingdom. By his death, the highest post to which an English subject can aspire was left vacant; and at the same moment, the influence which had yoked together and

Digitized by Google

reigned in so many turbulent and ambitious spirits was withdrawn.

Within a week after Pelham's death, it was determined that the Duke of Newcastle should be placed at the head of the treasury; but the arrangement was still far from complete. Who was to be the leading Minister of the Crown in the House of Commons? Was the office to be intrusted to a man of eminent talents? And would not such a man in such a place demand and obtain a larger share of power and patronage than Newcastle would be disposed to concede? Was a mere drudge to be employed? And what probability was there that a mere drudge would be able to manage a large and stormy assembly, abounding with able and experienced men?

Pope has said of that wretched miser Sir John Cutler,

> "Cutler saw tenants break and houses fall
> For very want: he could not build a wall."

Newcastle's love of power resembled Cutler's love of money. It was an avarice which thwarted itself, a penny-wise and pound-foolish cupidity. An immediate outlay was so painful to him that he would not venture to make the most desirable improvement. If he could have found it in his heart to cede at once a portion of his authority, he might probably have ensured the continuance of what remained. But he thought it better to construct a weak and rotten government, which tottered at the smallest breath, and fell in the first storm, than to pay the necessary price for sound and durable materials. He wished to find some person who would be willing to accept the lead of the House of Commons on terms similar to those on which Secretary Craggs had acted under Sunderland,

Digitized by Google

five-and-thirty years before. Craggs could hardly be called a minister. He was a mere agent for the Minister. He was not trusted with the higher secrets of state, but obeyed implicitly the directions of his superior, and was, to use Doddington's expression, merely Lord Sunderland's man. But times were changed. Since the days of Sunderland, the importance of the House of Commons had been constantly on the increase. During many years, the person who conducted the business of the Government in that House had almost always been Prime Minister. In these circumstances, it was not to be supposed that any person who possessed the talents necessary for the situation would stoop to accept it on such terms as Newcastle was disposed to offer.

Pitt was ill at Bath; and, had he been well and in London, neither the King nor Newcastle would have been disposed to make any overtures to him. The cool and wary Murray had set his heart on professional objects. Negotiations were opened with Fox. Newcastle behaved like himself, that is to say, childishly and basely. The proposition which he made was that Fox should be Secretary of State, with the lead of the House of Commons; that the disposal of the secret-service money, or, in plain words, the business of buying members of Parliament, should be left to the First Lord of the Treasury; but that Fox should be exactly informed of the way in which this fund was employed.

To these conditions Fox assented. But the next day every thing was in confusion. Newcastle had changed his mind. The conversation which took place between Fox and the Duke is one of the most curious in English history. "My brother," said Newcastle, "when he was at the Treasury, never told anybody

Digitized by Google

what he did with the secret-service money. No more will I." The answer was obvious. Pelham had been, not only First Lord of the Treasury, but also manager of the House of Commons; and it was therefore unnecessary for him to confide to any other person his dealings with the members of that House. "But how," said Fox, "can I lead in the Commons without information on this head? How can I talk to gentlemen when I do not know which of them have received gratifications and which have not? And who," he continued, "is to have the disposal of places?" — "I myself," said the Duke. — "How then am I to manage the House of Commons?" — "Oh, let the members of the House of Commons come to me." Fox then mentioned the general election which was approaching, and asked how the ministerial boroughs were to be filled up. "Do not trouble yourself," said Newcastle; "that is all settled." This was too much for human nature to bear. Fox refused to accept the Secretaryship of State on such terms; and the Duke confided the management of the House of Commons to a dull, harmless man, whose name is almost forgotten in our time, Sir Thomas Robinson.

When Pitt returned from Bath he affected great moderation, though his haughty soul was boiling with resentment. He did not complain of the manner in which he had been passed by, but said openly that, in his opinion, Fox was the fittest man to lead the House of Commons. The rivals, reconciled by their common interest and their common enmities, concerted a plan of operations for the next session. "Sir Thomas Robinson lead us!" said Pitt to Fox. "The Duke might as well send his jack-boot to lead us."

The elections of 1754 were favourable to the admin-

Digitized by Google

istration. But the aspect of foreign affairs was threatening. In India the English and the French had been employed, ever since the peace of Aix-la-Chapelle, in cutting each other's throats. They had lately taken to the same practice in America. It might have been foreseen that stirring times were at hand, times which would call for abilities very different from those of Newcastle and Robinson.

In November the Parliament met; and before the end of that month the new Secretary of State had been so unmercifully baited by the Paymaster of the Forces and the Secretary at War that he was thoroughly sick of his situation. Fox attacked him with great force and acrimony. Pitt affected a kind of contemptuous tenderness for Sir Thomas, and directed his attacks principally against Newcastle. On one occasion he asked in tones of thunder whether Parliament sat only to register the edicts of one too powerful subject? The Duke was scared out of his wits. He was afraid to dismiss the mutineers; he was afraid to promote them; but it was absolutely necessary to do something. Fox, as the less proud and intractable of the refractory pair, was preferred. A seat in the Cabinet was offered to him on condition that he would give efficient support to the ministry in Parliament. In an evil hour for his fame and his fortunes he accepted the offer, and abandoned his connection with Pitt, who never forgave this desertion.

Sir Thomas, assisted by Fox, contrived to get through the business of the year without much trouble. Pitt was waiting his time. The negotiations pending between France and England took every day a more unfavourable aspect. Towards the close of the session the King sent a message to inform the House of Com-

Digitized by Google

mons that he had found it necessary to make preparations for war. The House returned an address of thanks, and passed a vote of credit. During the recess, the old animosity of both nations was inflamed by a series of disastrous events. An English force was cut off in America; and several French merchantmen were taken in the West Indian seas. It was plain that an appeal to arms was at hand.

The first object of the King was to secure Hanover; and Newcastle was disposed to gratify his master. Treaties were concluded, after the fashion of those times, with several petty German princes, who bound themselves to find soldiers if England would find money; and, as it was suspected that Frederic the Second had set his heart on the electoral dominions of his uncle, Russia was hired to keep Prussia in awe.

When the stipulations of these treaties were made known, there arose throughout the kingdom a murmur from which a judicious observer might easily prognosticate the approach of a tempest. Newcastle encountered strong opposition, even from those whom he had always considered as his tools. Legge, the Chancellor of the Exchequer, refused to sign the Treasury warrants which were necessary to give effect to the treaties. Those persons who were supposed to possess the confidence of the young Prince of Wales and of his mother held very menacing language. In this perplexity Newcastle sent for Pitt, hugged him, patted him, smirked at him, wept over him, and lisped out the highest compliments and the most splendid promises. The King, who had hitherto been as sulky as possible, would be civil to him at the levee; he should be brought into the Cabinet; he should be consulted about every thing; if he would only be as good as to support

Digitized by Google

the Hessian subsidy in the House of Commons. Pitt coldly declined the proffered seat in the Cabinet, expressed the highest love and reverence for the King, and said that, if his Majesty felt a strong personal interest in the Hessian treaty he would so far deviate from the line which he had traced out for himself as to give that treaty his support. "Well, and the Russian subsidy," said Newcastle. "No," said Pitt, "not a system of subsidies." The Duke summoned Lord Hardwicke to his aid; but Pitt was inflexible. Murray would do nothing. Robinson could do nothing. It was necessary to have recourse to Fox. He became Secretary of State, with the full authority of a leader in the House of Commons; and Sir Thomas was pensioned off on the Irish establishment.

In November, 1755, the Houses met. Public expectation was wound up to the height. After ten quiet years there was to be an Opposition countenanced by the heir apparent of the throne, and headed by the most brilliant orator of the age. The debate on the address was long remembered as one of the greatest parliamentary conflicts of that generation. It began at three in the afternoon, and lasted till five the next morning. It was on this night that Gerard Hamilton delivered that single speech from which his nickname was derived. His eloquence threw into the shade every orator except Pitt, who declaimed against the subsidies for an hour and a half with extraordinary energy and effect. Those powers which had formerly spread terror through the majorities of Walpole and Carteret were now displayed in their highest perfection before an audience long unaccustomed to such exhibitions. One fragment of this celebrated oration remains in a state of tolerable preservation. It is

Digitized by Google

the comparison between the coalition of Fox and Newcastle, and the junction of the Rhone and the Saone. "At Lyons," said Pitt, "I was taken to see the place where the two rivers meet, the one gentle, feeble, languid, and, though languid, yet of no depth, the other a boisterous and impetuous torrent: but different as they are, they meet at last." The amendment moved by the Opposition was rejected by a great majority; and Pitt and Legge were immediately dismissed from their offices.

During several months the contest in the House of Commons was extremely sharp. Warm debates took place on the estimates, debates still warmer on the subsidiary treaties. The Government succeeded in every division; but the fame of Pitt's eloquence, and the influence of his lofty and determined character, continued to increase through the Session; and the events which followed the prorogation made it utterly impossible for any other person to manage the Parliament or the country.

The war began in every part of the world with events disastrous to England, and even more shameful than disastrous. But the most humiliating of these events was the loss of Minorca. The Duke of Richelieu, an old fop who had passed his life from sixteen to sixty in seducing women for whom he cared not one straw, landed on that island, and succeeded in reducing it. Admiral Byng was sent from Gibraltar to throw succours into Port-Mahon; but he did not think fit to engage the French squadron, and sailed back without having effected his purpose. The people were inflamed to madness. A storm broke forth, which appalled even those who remembered the days of Excise and of South-Sea. The shops were filled

Digitized by Google

with libels and caricatures. The walls were covered with placards. The city of London called for vengeance, and the cry was echoed from every corner of the kingdom. Dorsetshire, Huntingdonshire, Bedfordshire, Buckinghamshire, Somersetshire, Lancashire, Suffolk, Shropshire, Surry, sent up strong addresses to the throne, and instructed their representatives to vote for a strict inquiry into the causes of the late disasters. In the great towns the feeling was as strong as in the counties. In some of the instructions it was even recommended that the supplies should be stopped.

The nation was in a state of angry and sullen despondency, almost unparalleled in history. People have, in all ages, been in the habit of talking about the good old times of their ancestors, and the degeneracy of their contemporaries. This is in general merely a cant. But in 1756 it was something more. At this time appeared Brown's Estimate, a book now remembered only by the allusions in Cowper's Table Talk and in Burke's Letters on a Regicide Peace. It was universally read, admired, and believed. The author fully convinced his readers that they were a race of cowards and scoundrels; that nothing could save them; that they were on the point of being enslaved by their enemies, and that they richly deserved their fate. Such were the speculations to which ready credence was given at the outset of the most glorious war in which England had ever been engaged.

Newcastle now began to tremble for his place, and for the only thing which was dearer to him than his place, his neck. The people were not in a mood to be trifled with. Their cry was for blood. For this once they might be contented with the sacrifice of Byng. But what if fresh disasters should take place? What

Digitized by Google

if an unfriendly sovereign should ascend the throne? What if a hostile House of Commons should be chosen?

At length, in October, the decisive crisis came. The new Secretary of State had been long sick of the perfidy and levity of the First Lord of the Treasury, and began to fear that he might be made a scapegoat to save the old intriguer who, imbecile as he seemed, never wanted dexterity where danger was to be avoided. Fox threw up his office. Newcastle had recourse to Murray; but Murray had now within his reach the favourite object of his ambition. The situation of Chief-Justice of the King's Bench was vacant; and the Attorney-General was fully resolved to obtain it, or to go into Opposition. Newcastle offered him any terms, the Duchy of Lancaster for life, a tellership of the Exchequer, any amount of pension, two thousand a year, six thousand a year. When the Ministers found that Murray's mind was made up, they pressed for delay, the delay of a session, a month, a week, a day. Would he only make his appearance once more in the House of Commons? Would he only speak in favour of the address? He was inexorable, and peremptorily said that they might give or withhold the Chief-Justiceship, but that he would be Attorney-General no longer.

Newcastle now contrived to overcome the prejudices of the King, and overtures were made to Pitt, through Lord Hardwicke. Pitt knew his power, and showed that he knew it. He demanded as an indispensable condition that Newcastle should be altogether excluded from the new arrangement.

The Duke was in a state of ludicrous distress. He ran about chattering and crying, asking advice and listening to none. In the mean time, the Session drew near. The public excitement was unabated. Nobody

Digitized by Google

could be found to face Pitt and Fox in the House of Commons. Newcastle's heart failed him, and he tendered his resignation.

The King sent for Fox, and directed him to form the plan of an administration in concert with Pitt. But Pitt had not forgotten old injuries, and positively refused to act with Fox.

The King now applied to the Duke of Devonshire, and this mediator succeeded in making an arrangement. He consented to take the Treasury. Pitt became Secretary of State, with the lead of the House of Commons. The Great Seal was put into commission. Legge returned to the Exchequer; and Lord Temple, whose sister Pitt had lately married, was placed at the head of the Admiralty.

It was clear from the first that this administration would last but a very short time. It lasted not quite five months; and, during those five months, Pitt and Lord Temple were treated with rudeness by the King, and found but feeble support in the House of Commons. It is a remarkable fact, that the Opposition prevented the re-election of some of the new Ministers. Pitt, who sat for one of the boroughs which were in the Pelham interest, found some difficulty in obtaining a seat after his acceptance of the seals. So destitute was the new Government of that sort of influence without which no Government could then be durable. One of the arguments most frequently urged against the Reform Bill was that, under a system of popular representation, men whose presence in the House of Commons was necessary to the conducting of public business might often find it impossible to find seats. Should this inconvenience ever be felt, there cannot be the slightest difficulty in devising and applying a remedy. But those

Digitized by Google

who threatened us with this evil ought to have remembered that, under the old system, a great man called to power at a great crisis by the voice of the whole nation was in danger of being excluded, by an aristocratical cabal, from that House of which he was the most distinguished ornament.

The most important event of this short administration was the trial of Byng. On that subject public opinion is still divided. We think the punishment of the Admiral altogether unjust and absurd. Treachery, cowardice, ignorance amounting to what lawyers have called *crassa ignorantia*, are fit objects of severe penal inflictions. But Byng was not found guilty of treachery, of cowardice, or of gross ignorance of his profession He died for doing what the most loyal subject, the most intrepid warrior, the most experienced seaman, might have done. He died for an error in judgment, an error such as the greatest commanders, Frederic, Napoleon, Wellington, have often committed, and have often acknowledged. Such errors are not proper objects of punishment, for this reason, that the punishing of such errors tends not to prevent them, but to produce them. The dread of an ignominious death may stimulate sluggishness to exertion, may keep a traitor to his standard, may prevent a coward from running away, but it has no tendency to bring out those qualities which enable men to form prompt and judicious decisions in great emergencies. The best marksman may be expected to fail when the apple which is to be his mark is set on his child's head. We cannot conceive any thing more likely to deprive an officer of his self-possession at the time when he most needs it than the knowledge that, if the judgment of his superiors should not agree with his, he will be executed with

Digitized by Google

every circumstance of shame. Queens, it has often been said, run far greater risk in childbed than private women, merely because their medical attendants are more anxious. The surgeon who attended Marie Louise was altogether unnerved by his emotions. "Compose yourself," said Bonaparte; "imagine that you are assisting a poor girl in the Faubourg Saint Antoine." This was surely a far wiser course than that of the Eastern king in the Arabian Knights' Entertainments, who proclaimed that the physicians who failed to cure his daughter should have their heads chopped off. Bonaparte knew mankind well; and, as he acted towards this surgeon, he acted towards his officers. No sovereign was ever so indulgent to mere errors of judgment; and it is certain that no sovereign ever had in his service so many military men fit for the highest commands.

Pitt acted a brave and honest part on this occasion. He ventured to put both his power and his popularity to hazard, and spoke manfully for Byng, both in Parliament and in the royal presence. But the King was inexorable. "The House of Commons, Sir," said Pitt, "seems inclined to mercy." "Sir," answered the King, "you have taught me to look for the sense of my people in other places than the House of Commons." The saying has more point than most of those which are recorded of George the Second, and, though sarcastically meant, contains a high and just compliment to Pitt.

The King disliked Pitt, but absolutely hated Temple. The new Secretary of State, his Majesty said, had never read Vatel, and was tedious and pompous, but respectful. The First Lord of the Admiralty was grossly impertinent. Walpole tells one story, which,

Digitized by Google

we fear, is much too good to be true. He assures us that Temple entertained his royal master with an elaborate parallel between Byng's behaviour at Minorca, and his Majesty's behaviour at Oudenarde, in which the advantage was all on the side of the Admiral.

This state of things could not last. Early in April, Pitt and all his friends were turned out, and Newcastle was summoned to St. James's. But the public discontent was not extinguished. It had subsided when Pitt was called to power. But it still glowed under the embers; and it now burst at once into a flame. The stocks fell. The Common Council met. The freedom of the city was voted to Pitt. All the greatest corporate towns followed the example. "For some weeks," says Walpole, "it rained gold boxes."

This was the turning point of Pitt's life. It might have been expected that a man of so haughty and vehement a nature, treated so ungraciously by the Court, and supported so enthusiastically by the people, would have eagerly taken the first opportunity of showing his power and gratifying his resentment; and an opportunity was not wanting. The members for many counties and large towns had been instructed to vote for an inquiry into the circumstances which had produced the miscarriage of the preceding year. A motion for inquiry had been carried in the House of Commons, without opposition; and, a few days after Pitt's dismissal, the investigation commenced. Newcastle and his colleagues obtained a vote of acquittal; but the minority were so strong that they could not venture to ask for a vote of approbation, as they had at first intended; and it was thought by some shrewd observers that, if Pitt had exerted him-

Digitized by Google

self to the utmost of his power, the inquiry might have ended in a censure, if not in an impeachment.

Pitt showed on this occasion a moderation and self-government which was not habitual to him. He had found by experience, that he could not stand alone. His eloquence and his popularity had done much, very much for him. Without rank, without fortune, without borough interest, hated by the King, hated by the aristocracy, he was a person of the first importance in the state. He had been suffered to form a ministry, and to pronounce sentence of exclusion on all his rivals, on the most powerful nobleman of the Whig party, on the ablest debater in the House of Commons. And he now found that he had gone too far. The English Constitution was not, indeed, without a popular element. But other elements generally predominated. The confidence and admiration of the nation might make a statesman formidable at the head of an Opposition, might load him with framed and glazed parchments and gold boxes, might possibly, under very peculiar circumstances, such as those of the preceding year, raise him for a time to power. But, constituted as Parliament then was, the favourite of the people could not depend on a majority in the people's own House. The Duke of Newcastle, however contemptible in morals, manners, and understanding, was a dangerous enemy. His rank, his wealth, his unrivalled parliamentary interest, would alone have made him important. But this was not all. The Whig aristocracy regarded him as their leader. His long possession of power had given him a kind of prescriptive right to possess it still. The House of Commons had been elected when he was at the head of affairs. The members for the ministerial boroughs had all been

Digitized by Google

nominated by him. The public offices swarmed with his creatures.

Pitt desired power; and he desired it, we really believe, from high and generous motives. He was, in the strict sense of the word, a patriot. He had none of that philanthropy which the great French writers of his time preached to all the nations of Europe. He loved England as an Athenian loved the City of the Violet Crown, as a Roman loved the City of the Seven Hills. He saw his country insulted and defeated. He saw the national spirit sinking. Yet he knew what the resources of the empire, vigorously employed, could effect; and he felt that he was the man to employ them vigorously. "My Lord," he said to the Duke of Devonshire, "I am sure that I can save this country, and that nobody else can."

Desiring, then, to be in power, and feeling that his abilities and the public confidence were not alone sufficient to keep him in power against the wishes of the Court and of the aristocracy, he began to think of a coalition with Newcastle.

Newcastle was equally disposed to a reconciliation. He, too, had profited by his recent experience. He had found that the Court and the aristocracy, though powerful, were not every thing in the state. A strong oligarchical connection, a great borough interest, ample patronage, and secret-service money, might, in quiet times, be all that a Minister needed; but it was unsafe to trust wholly to such support in time of war, of discontent, and of agitation. The composition of the House of Commons was not wholly aristocratical; and, whatever be the composition of large deliberative assemblies, their spirit is always in some degree popular. Where there are free debates, eloquence must have

Digitized by Google

admirers, and reason must make converts. Where there is a free press, the governors must live in constant awe of the opinions of the governed.

Thus these two men, so unlike in character, so lately mortal enemies, were necessary to each other. Newcastle had fallen in November, for want of that public confidence which Pitt possessed, and of that parliamentary support which Pitt was better qualified than any man of his time to give. Pitt had fallen in April, for want of that species of influence which Newcastle had passed his whole life in acquiring and hoarding. Neither of them had power enough to support himself. Each of them had power enough to overturn the other. Their union would be irresistible. Neither the King nor any party in the state would be able to stand against them.

Under these circumstances, Pitt was not disposed to proceed to extremities against his predecessors in office. Something, however, was due to consistency; and something was necessary for the preservation of his popularity. He did little; but that little he did in such a manner as to produce great effect. He came down to the House in all the pomp of gout, his legs swathed in flannels, his arm dangling in a sling. He kept his seat through several fatiguing days, in spite of pain and languor. He uttered a few sharp and vehement sentences; but during the greater part of the discussion, his language was unusually gentle.

When the inquiry had terminated without a vote either of approbation or of censure, the great obstacle to a coalition was removed. Many obstacles, however, remained. The King was still rejoicing in his deliverance from the proud and aspiring Minister who had been forced on him by the cry of the nation. His

Digitized by Google

Majesty's indignation was excited to the highest point when it appeared that Newcastle, who had, during thirty years, been loaded with marks of royal favour, and who had bound himself, by a solemn promise, never to coalesce with Pitt, was meditating a new perfidy. Of all the statesmen of that age, Fox had the largest share of royal favour. A coalition between Fox and Newcastle was the arrangement which the King wished to bring about. But the Duke was too cunning to fall into such a snare. As a speaker in Parliament, Fox might perhaps be, on the whole, as useful to an administration as his great rival; but he was one of the most unpopular men in England. Then, again, Newcastle felt all that jealousy of Fox, which, according to the proverb, generally exists between two of a trade. Fox would certainly intermeddle with that department which the Duke was most desirous to reserve entire to himself, the jobbing department. Pitt, on the other hand, was quite willing to leave the drudgery of corruption to any who might be inclined to undertake it.

During eleven weeks England remained without a ministry; and in the mean time Parliament was sitting, and a war was raging. The prejudices of the King, the haughtiness of Pitt, the jealousy, levity, and treachery of Newcastle, delayed the settlement. Pitt knew the Duke too well to trust him without security. The Duke loved power too much to be inclined to give security. While they were haggling, the King was in vain attempting to produce a final rupture between them, or to form a Government without them. At one time he applied to Lord Waldgrave, an honest and sensible man, but unpractised in affairs. Lord Waldgrave had the courage to accept the Trea-

Digitized by Google

sury, but soon found that no administration formed by him had the smallest chance of standing a single week.

At length the King's pertinacity yielded to the necessity of the case. After exclaiming with great bitterness, and with some justice, against the Whigs, who ought, he said, to be ashamed to talk about liberty while they submitted to the footmen of the Duke of Newcastle, his Majesty submitted. The influence of Leicester House prevailed on Pitt to abate a little, and but a little, of his high demands; and all at once, out of the chaos in which parties had for some time been rising, falling, meeting, separating, arose a government as strong at home as that of Pelham, as successful abroad as that of Godolphin.

Newcastle took the Treasury. Pitt was Secretary of State, with the lead in the House of Commons, and with the supreme direction of the war and of foreign affairs. Fox, the only man who could have given much annoyance to the new Government, was silenced with the office of Paymaster, which, during the continuance of that war, was probably the most lucrative place in the whole Government. He was poor, and the situation was tempting; yet it cannot but seem extraordinary that a man who had played a first part in politics, and whose abilities had been found not unequal to that part, who had sat in the Cabinet, who had led the House of Commons, who had been twice intrusted by the King with the office of forming a ministry, who was regarded as the rival of Pitt, and who at one time seemed likely to be a successful rival, should have consented, for the sake of emolument, to take a subordinate place, and to give silent votes for all the measures of a government to the deliberations of which he was not summoned.

Digitized by Google

The first acts of the new administration were characterized rather by vigour than by judgment. Expeditions were sent against different parts of the French coast with little success. The small island of Aix was taken, Rochefort threatened, a few ships burned in the harbour of St. Maloes, and a few guns and mortars brought home as trophies from the fortifications of Cherbourg. But soon conquests of a very different kind filled the kingdom with pride and rejoicing. A succession of victories undoubtedly brilliant, and, as it was thought, not barren, raised to the highest point the fame of the minister to whom the conduct of the war had been intrusted. In July, 1758, Louisburg fell. The whole island of Cape Breton was reduced. The fleet to which the Court of Versailles had confided the defence of French America was destroyed. The captured standards were borne in triumph from Kensington Palace to the city, and were suspended in St. Paul's Church, amidst the roar of guns and kettle-drums, and the shouts of an immense multitude. Addresses of congratulation came in from all the great towns of England. Parliament met only to decree thanks and monuments, and to bestow, without one murmur, supplies more than double of those which had been given during the war of the Grand Alliance.

The year 1759 opened with the conquest of Gorec. Next fell Guadaloupe; then Ticonderoga; then Niagara. The Toulon squadron was completely defeated by Boscawen off Cape Lagos. But the greatest exploit of the year was the achievement of Wolfe on the heights of Abraham. The news of his glorious death and of the fall of Quebec reached London in the very week in which the Houses met. All was joy and triumph. Envy and faction were forced to join in the

Digitized by Google

general applause. Whigs and Tories vied with each other in extolling the genius and energy of Pitt. His colleagues were never talked of or thought of. The House of Commons, the nation, the colonies, our allies, our enemies, had their eyes fixed on him alone.

Scarcely had Parliament voted a monument to Wolfe when another great event called for fresh rejoicings. The Brest fleet, under the command of Conflans, had put out to sea. It was overtaken by an English squadron under Hawke. Conflans attempted to take shelter close under the French coast. The shore was rocky: the night was black: the wind was furious: the waves of the Bay of Biscay ran high. But Pitt had infused into every branch of the service a spirit which had long been unknown. No British seaman was disposed to err on the same side with Byng. The pilot told Hawke that the attack could not be made without the greatest danger. "You have done your duty in remonstrating," answered Hawke; "I will answer for every thing. I command you to lay me alongside the French admiral." Two French ships of the line struck. Four were destroyed. The rest hid themselves in the rivers of Britanny.

The year 1760 came; and still triumph followed triumph. Montreal was taken; the whole province of Canada was subjugated; the French fleets underwent a succession of disasters in the seas of Europe and America.

In the meantime conquests equalling in rapidity, and far surpassing in magnitude, those of Cortes and Pizarro, had been achieved in the East. In the space of three years the English had founded a mighty empire. The French had been defeated in every part of India. Chandernagore had surrendered to Clive,

Digitized by Google

Pondicherry to Coote. Throughout Bengal, Bahar, Orissa and the Carnatic, the authority of the East India Company was more absolute than that of Acbar or Aurungzebe had ever been.

On the continent of Europe the odds were against England. We had but one important ally, the King of Prussia; and he was attacked, not only by France, but also by Russia and Austria. Yet even on the Continent, the energy of Pitt triumphed over all difficulties. Vehemently as he had condemned the practice of subsidising foreign princes, he now carried that practice farther than Carteret himself would have ventured to do. The active and able Sovereign of Prussia received such pecuniary assistance as enabled him to maintain the conflict on equal terms against his powerful enemies. On no subject had Pitt ever spoken with so much eloquence and ardour as on the mischiefs of the Hanoverian connection. He now declared, not without much show of reason, that it would be unworthy of the English people to suffer their King to be deprived of his electoral dominions in an English quarrel. He assured his countrymen that they should be no losers, and that he would conquer America for them in Germany. By taking this line he conciliated the King, and lost no part of his influence with the nation. In Parliament, such was the ascendency which his eloquence, his success, his high situation, his pride, and his intrepidity had obtained for him, that he took liberties with the House of which there had been no example, and which have never since been imitated. No orator could there venture to reproach him with inconsistency. One unfortunate man made the attempt, and was so much disconcerted by the scornful demeanour of the Minister that he stammered, stopped, and

Digitized by Google

sat down. Even the old Tory country gentlemen, to whom the very name of Hanover had been odious, gave their hearty Ayes to subsidy after subsidy. In a lively contemporary satire, much more lively indeed than delicate, this remarkable conversion is not unhappily described.

> "No more they make a fiddle-faddle
> About a Hessian horse or saddle.
> No more of continental measures;
> No more of wasting British treasures.
> Ten millions, and a vote of credit,
> 'Tis right. He can't be wrong who did it."

The success of Pitt's continental measures was such as might have been expected from their vigour. When he came into power, Hanover was in imminent danger; and before he had been in office three months, the whole electorate was in the hands of France. But the face of affairs was speedily changed. The invaders were driven out. An army, partly English, partly Hanoverian, partly composed of soldiers furnished by the petty princes of Germany, was placed under the command of Prince Ferdinand of Brunswick. The French were beaten in 1758 at Crevelt. In 1759 they received a still more complete and humiliating defeat at Minden.

In the meantime, the nation exhibited all the signs of wealth and prosperity. The merchants of London had never been more thriving. The importance of several great commercial and manufacturing towns, of Glasgow in particular, dates from this period. The fine inscription on the monument of Lord Chatham in Guildhall records the general opinion of the citizens of London, that under his administration commerce had been "united with and made to flourish by war."

Digitized by Google

It must be owned that these signs of prosperity were in some degree delusive. It must be owned that some of our conquests were rather splendid than useful. It must be owned that the expense of the war never entered into Pitt's consideration. Perhaps it would be more correct to say that the cost of his victories increased the pleasure with which he contemplated them. Unlike other men in his situation, he loved to exaggerate the sums which the nation was laying out under his direction. He was proud of the sacrifices and efforts which his eloquence and his success had induced his countrymen to make. The price at which he purchased faithful service and complete victory, though far smaller than that which his son, the most profuse and incapable of war ministers, paid for treachery, defeat, and shame, was long and severely felt by the nation.

Even as a war minister, Pitt is scarcely entitled to all the praise which his contemporaries lavished on him. We, perhaps from ignorance, cannot discern in his arrangements any appearance of profound or dexterous combination. Several of his expeditions, particularly those which were sent to the coast of France, were at once costly and absurd. Our Indian conquests, though they add to the splendour of the period during which he was at the head of affairs, were not planned by him. He had undoubtedly great energy, great determination, great means at his command. His temper was enterprising; and, situated as he was, he had only to follow his temper. The wealth of a rich nation, the valour of a brave nation, were ready to support him in every attempt.

In one respect, however, he deserved all the praise that he has ever received. The success of our arms was perhaps owing less to the skill of his dispositions

Digitized by Google

than to the national resources and the national spirit. But that the national spirit rose to the emergency, that the national resources were contributed with unexampled cheerfulness, this was undoubtedly his work. The ardour of his soul had set the whole kingdom on fire. It inflamed every soldier who dragged the cannon up the heights of Quebec, and every sailor who boarded the French ships among the rocks of Britanny. The Minister, before he had been long in office, had imparted to the commanders whom he employed his own impetuous, adventurous, and defying character. They, like him, were disposed to risk every thing, to play double or quits to the last, to think nothing done while any thing remained undone, to fail rather than not to attempt. For the errors of rashness there might be indulgence. For over-caution, for faults like those of Lord George Sackville, there was no mercy. In other times, and against other enemies, this mode of warfare might have failed. But the state of the French government and of the French nation gave every advantage to Pitt. The fops and intriguers of Versailles were appalled and bewildered by his vigour. A panic spread through all ranks of society. Our enemies soon considered it as a settled thing that they were always to be beaten. Thus victory begot victory; till, at last, wherever the forces of the two nations met, they met with disdainful confidence on one side, and with a craven fear on the other.

The situation which Pitt occupied at the close of the reign of George the Second was the most enviable ever occupied by any public man in English history. He had conciliated the King; he domineered over the House of Commons; he was adored by the people; he was admired by all Europe. He was the first English-

Digitized by Google

man of his time; and he had made England the first country in the world. The Great Commoner, the name by which he was often designated, might look down with scorn on coronets and garters. The nation was drunk with joy and pride. The Parliament was as quiet as it had been under Pelham. The old party distinctions were almost effaced; nor was their place yet supplied by distinctions of a still more important kind. A new generation of country squires and rectors had arisen who knew not the Stuarts. The Dissenters were tolerated; the Catholics not cruelly persecuted. The Church was drowsy and indulgent. The great civil and religious conflict which began at the Reformation seemed to have terminated in universal repose. Whigs and Tories, Churchmen and Puritans, spoke with equal reverence of the constitution, and with equal enthusiasm of the talents, virtues, and services of the Minister.

A few years sufficed to change the whole aspect of affairs. A nation convulsed by faction, a throne assailed by the fiercest invective, a House of Commons hated and despised by the nation, England set against Scotland, Britain set against America, a rival legislature sitting beyond the Atlantic, English blood shed by English bayonets, our armies capitulating, our conquests wrested from us, our enemies hastening to take vengeance for past humiliation, our flag scarcely able to maintain itself in our own seas, such was the spectacle which Pitt lived to see. But the history of this great revolution requires far more space than we can at present bestow. We leave the Great Commoner in the zenith of his glory. It is not impossible that we may take some other opportunity of tracing his life to its melancholly, yet not inglorious close.

Digitized by Google

SIR JAMES MACKINTOSH.[1]

(*Edinburgh Review*, July, 1835.)

It is with unfeigned diffidence that we venture to give our opinion of the last work of Sir James Mackintosh. We have in vain tried to perform what ought to be to a critic an easy and habitual act. We have in vain tried to separate the book from the writer, and to judge of it as if it bore some unknown name. But it is to no purpose. All the lines of that venerable countenance are before us. All the little peculiar cadences of that voice from which scholars and statesmen loved to receive the lessons of a serene and benevolent

[1] *History of the Revolution in England, in* 1688. *Comprising a View of the Reign of James the Second, from his Accession to the Enterprise of the Prince of Orange*, by the late Right Honourable Sir James Mackintosh; *and completed to the Settlement of the Crown, by the Editor. To which is prefixed a Notice of the Life, Writings, and Speeches of Sir James Mackintosh.* 4to. London: 1834.*

* In this review, as it originally stood, the editor of the History of the Revolution was attacked with an asperity which neither literary defects nor speculative differences can justify, and which ought to be reserved for offences against the laws of morality and honour. The reviewer was not actuated by any feeling of personal malevolence: for when he wrote this paper in a distant country, he did not know, or even guess, whom he was assailing. His only motive was regard for the memory of an eminent man whom he loved and honoured, and who appeared to him to have been unworthily treated.

The editor is now dead; and, while living, declared that he had been misunderstood, and that he had written in no spirit of enmity to Sir James Mackintosh, for whom he professed the highest respect.

Many passages have therefore been softened, and some wholly omitted. The severe censure passed on the literary execution of the Memoir and the Continuation could not be retracted without a violation of truth. But whatever could be construed into an imputation on the moral character of the editor has been carefully expunged.

Digitized by Google

wisdom are in our ears. We will attempt to preserve strict impartiality. But we are not ashamed to own that we approach this relic of a virtuous and most accomplished man with feelings of respect and gratitude which may possibly pervert our judgment.

It is hardly possible to avoid instituting a comparison between this work and another celebrated Fragment. Our readers will easily guess that we allude to Mr. Fox's History of James the Second. The two books relate to the same subject. Both were posthumously published. Neither had received the last corrections. The authors belonged to the same political party, and held the same opinions concerning the merits and defects of the English constitution, and concerning most of the prominent characters and events in English history. Both had thought much on the principles of government; yet they were not mere speculators. Both had ransacked the archives of rival kingdoms, and pored on folios which had mouldered for ages in deserted libraries; yet they were not mere antiquaries. They had one eminent qualification for writing history: they had spoken history, acted history, lived history. The turns of political fortune, the ebb and flow of popular feeling, the hidden mechanism by which parties are moved, all these things were the subjects of their constant thought and of their most familiar conversation. Gibbon has remarked that he owed part of his success as a historian to the observations which he had made as an officer in the militia and as a member of the House of Commons. The remark is most just. We have not the smallest doubt that his campaign, though he never saw an enemy, and his parliamentary attendance, though he never made a speech, were of far

Digitized by Google

more use to him than years of retirement and study would have been. If the time that he spent on parade and at mess in Hampshire, or on the Treasury bench and at Brookes's during the storms which overthrew Lord North and Lord Shelburne, had been passed in the Bodleian Library, he might have avoided some inaccuracies; he might have enriched his notes with a greater number of references; but he would never have produced so lively a picture of the court, the camp, and the senate-house. In this respect Mr. Fox and Sir James Mackintosh had great advantages over almost every English historian who has written since the time of Burnet. Lord Lyttelton had indeed the same advantages; but he was incapable of using them. Pedantry was so deeply fixed in his nature that the hustings, the Treasury, the Exchequer, the House of Commons, the House of Lords, left him the same dreaming schoolboy that they found him.

When we compare the two interesting works of which we have been speaking, we have little difficulty in giving the preference to that of Sir James Mackintosh. Indeed the superiority of Mr. Fox to Sir James as an orator is hardly more clear than the superiority of Sir James to Mr. Fox as an historian. Mr. Fox with a pen in his hand, and Sir James on his legs in the House of Commons, were, we think, each out of his proper element. They were men, it is true, of far too much judgment and ability to fail scandalously in any undertaking to which they brought the whole power of their minds. The history of James the Second will always keep its place in our libraries as a valuable book; and Sir James Mackintosh succeeded in winning and maintaining a high place among the parliamentary speakers of his time. Yet we could

Digitized by Google

never read a page of Mr. Fox's writing, we could never listen for a quarter of an hour to the speaking of Sir James, without feeling that there was a constant effort, a tug up hill. Nature, or habit which had become nature, asserted its rights. Mr. Fox wrote debates. Sir James Mackintosh spoke essays.

As far as mere diction was concerned, indeed, Mr. Fox did his best to avoid those faults which the habit of public speaking is likely to generate. He was so nervously apprehensive of sliding into some colloquial incorrectness, of debasing his style by a mixture of parliamentary slang, that he ran into the opposite error, and purified his vocabulary with a scrupulosity unknown to any purist. "Ciceronem Allobroga dixit." He would not allow Addison, Bolingbroke, or Middleton to be a sufficient authority for an expression. He declared that he would use no word which was not to be found in Dryden. In any other person we should have called this solicitude mere foppery; and, in spite of all our admiration for Mr. Fox, we cannot but think that his extreme attention to the petty niceties of language was hardly worthy of so manly and so capacious an understanding. There were purists of this kind at Rome; and their fastidiousness was censured by Horace, with that perfect good sense and good taste which characterize all his writings. There were purists of this kind at the time of the revival of letters; and the two greatest scholars of that time raised their voices, the one from within, the other from without the Alps, against a scrupulosity so unreasonable. "Carent," said Politian, "quæ scribunt isti viribus et vita, carent actu, carent effectu, carent indole. . . . . Nisi liber ille præsto sit ex quo quid excerpant, colligere tria verba non possunt. . . . . Horum semper igitur oratio tremula, vacillans,

Digitized by Google

infirma. . . . . Quæso ne ista superstitione te alliges. . . . . Ut bene currere non potest qui pedem ponere studet in alienis tantum vestigiis, ita nec bene scribere qui tanquam de præscripto non audet egredi." — "Posthac," exclaims Erasmus, "non licebit episcopos appellare patres reverendos, nec in calce literarum scribere annum a Christo nato, quod id nusquam faciat Cicero. Quid autem ineptius quam, toto seculo novato, religione, imperiis, magistratibus, locorum vocabulis, ædificiis, cultu, moribus, non aliter audere loqui quam locutus est Cicero? Si revivisceret ipse Cicero, rideret hoc Ciceronianorum genus."

While Mr. Fox winnowed and sifted his phraseology with a care which seems hardly consistent with the simplicity and elevation of his mind, and of which the effect really was to debase and enfeeble his style, he was little on his guard against those more serious improprieties of manner into which a great orator who undertakes to write history is in danger of falling. There is about the whole book a vehement, contentious, replying manner. Almost every argument is put in the form of an interrogation, an ejaculation, or a sarcasm. The writer seems to be addressing himself to some imaginary audience, to be tearing in pieces a defence of the Stuarts which has just been pronounced by an imaginary Tory. Take, for example, his answer to Hume's remarks on the execution of Sydney; and substitute "the honourable gentleman" or "the noble Lord" for the name of Hume. The whole passage sounds like a powerful reply, thundered at three in the morning from the Opposition Bench. While we read it, we can almost fancy that we see and hear the great English debater, such as he has been described to us by the few who can still remember the Westminster scrutiny and the

Digitized by Google

Oczakow Negotiations, in the full paroxysm of inspiration, foaming, screaming, choked by the rushing multitude of his words.

It is true that the passage to which we have referred, and several other passages which we could point out, are admirable when considered merely as exhibitions of mental power. We at once recognise in them that consummate master of the whole art of intellectual gladiatorship, whose speeches, imperfectly as they have been transmitted to us, should be studied day and night by every man who wishes to learn the science of logical defence. We find in several parts of the History of James the Second fine specimens of that which we conceive to have been the great characteristic of Demosthenes among the Greeks, and of Fox among the orators of England, reason penetrated, and, if we may venture on the expression, made red-hot by passion. But this is not the kind of excellence proper to history; and it is hardly too much to say that whatever is strikingly good in Mr. Fox's Fragment is out of place.

With Sir James Mackintosh the case was reversed. His proper place was his library, a circle of men of letters, or a chair of moral and political philosophy. He distinguished himself highly in Parliament. But nevertheless Parliament was not exactly the sphere for him. The effect of his most successful speeches was small when compared with the quantity of ability and learning which was expended on them. We could easily name men who, not possessing a tenth part of his intellectual powers, hardly ever address the House of Commons without producing a greater impression than was produced by his most splendid and elaborate orations. His luminous and philosophical disquisition on the Reform Bill was spoken to empty benches.

Digitized by Google

Those, indeed, who had the wit to keep their seats, picked up hints which, skilfully used, made the fortune of more than one speech. But "it was caviare to the general." And even those who listened to Sir James with pleasure and admiration could not but acknowledge that he rather lectured than debated. An artist who should waste on a panorama, or a scene, or on a transparency, the exquisite finishing which we admire in some of the small Dutch interiors, would not squander his powers more than this eminent man too often did. His audience resembled the boy in the Heart of Mid-Lothian, who pushes away the lady's guineas with contempt, and insists on having the white money. They preferred the silver with which they were familiar, and which they were constantly passing about from hand to hand, to the gold which they had never before seen, and with the value of which they were unacquainted.

It is much to be regretted, we think, that Sir James Mackintosh did not wholly devote his later years to philosophy and literature. His talents were not those which enable a speaker to produce with rapidity a series of striking but transitory impressions, and to excite the minds of five hundred gentlemen at midnight, without saying any thing that any one of them will be able to remember in the morning. His arguments were of a very different texture from those which are produced in Parliament at a moment's notice, which puzzle a plain man who, if he had them before him in writing, would soon detect their fallacy, and which the great debater who employs them forgets within half an hour, and never thinks of again. Whatever was valuable in the compositions of Sir James Mackintosh was the ripe fruit of study and of

Digitized by Google

meditation. It was the same with his conversation. In his most familiar talk there was no wildness, no inconsistency, no amusing nonsense, no exaggeration for the sake of momentary effect. His mind was a vast magazine, admirably arranged. Every thing was there; and every thing was in its place. His judgments on men, on sects, on books, had been often and carefully tested and weighed, and had then been committed, each to his proper receptacle, in the most capacious and accurately constructed memory that any human being ever possessed. It would have been strange indeed if you had asked for any thing that was not to be found in that immense storehouse. The article which you required was not only there. It was ready. It was in its own proper compartment. In a moment it was brought down, unpacked, and displayed. If those who enjoyed the privilege—for a privilege indeed it was—of listening to Sir James Mackintosh, had been disposed to find some fault in his conversation, they might perhaps have observed that he yielded too little to the impulse of the moment. He seemed to be recollecting, not creating. He never appeared to catch a sudden glimpse of a subject in a new light. You never saw his opinions in the making, still rude, still inconsistent, and requiring to be fashioned by thought and discussion. They came forth, like the pillars of that temple in which no sound of axes or hammers was heard, finished, rounded, and exactly suited to their places. What Mr. Charles Lamb has said with so much humour and some truth, of the conversation of Scotchmen in general, was certainly true of this eminent Scotchman. He did not find, but bring. You could not cry halves to any thing that turned up while you were in his company.

Digitized by Google

The intellectual and moral qualities which are most important in a historian, he possessed in a very high degree. He was singularly mild, calm, and impartial in his judgments of men, and of parties. Almost all the distinguished writers who have treated of English history are advocates. Mr. Hallam and Sir James Mackintosh alone are entitled to be called judges. But the extreme austerity of Mr. Hallam takes away something from the pleasure of reading his learned, eloquent, and judicious writings. He is a judge, but a hanging judge, the Page or Buller of the High Court of Literary Justice. His black cap is in constant requisition. In the long calendar of those whom he has tried, there is hardly one who has not, in spite of evidence to character and recommendations to mercy, been sentenced and left for execution. Sir James, perhaps, erred a little on the other side. He liked a maiden assize, and came away with white gloves, after sitting in judgment on batches of the most notorious offenders. He had a quick eye for the redeeming parts of a character, and a large toleration for the infirmities of men exposed to strong temptations. But this lenity did not arise from ignorance or neglect of moral distinctions. Though he allowed perhaps too much weight to every extenuating circumstance that could be urged in favour of the transgressor, he never disputed the authority of the law, or showed his ingenuity by refining away its enactments. On every occasion he showed himself firm where principles were in question, but full of charity towards individuals.

We have no hesitation in pronouncing this Fragment decidedly the best history now extant of the reign of James the Second. It contains much new and curious information, of which excellent use has

Digitized by Google

been made. But we are not sure that the book is not in some degree open to the charge which the idle citizen in the Spectator brought against his pudding; "Mem. too many plums, and no suet." There is perhaps too much disquisition and too little narrative; and indeed this is the fault into which, judging from the habits of Sir James's mind, we should have thought him most likely to fall. What we assuredly did not anticipate was, that the narrative would be better executed than the disquisitions. We expected to find, and we have found, many just delineations of character, and many digressions full of interest, such as the account of the order of Jesuits, and of the state of prison discipline in England a hundred and fifty years ago. We expected to find, and we have found, many reflections breathing the spirit of a calm and benignant philosophy. But we did not, we own, expect to find that Sir James could tell a story as well as Voltaire or Hume. Yet such is the fact; and if any person doubts it, we would advise him to read the account of the events which followed the issuing of King James's declaration, the meeting of the clergy, the violent scene at the privy council, the commitment, trial, and acquittal of the bishops. The most superficial reader must be charmed, we think, by the liveliness of the narrative. But no person who is not acquainted with that vast mass of intractable materials of which the valuable and interesting part has been extracted and condensed can fully appreciate the skill of the writer. Here, and indeed throughout the book, we find many harsh and careless expressions which the author would probably have removed if he had lived to complete his work. But, in spite of these blemishes, we must say that we should find it difficult to point out,

Digitized by Google

in any modern history, any passage of equal length and at the same time of equal merit. We find in it the diligence, the accuracy, and the judgment of Hallam, united to the vivacity and the colouring of Southey. A history of England, written throughout in this manner, would be the most fascinating book in the language. It would be more in request at the circulating libraries than the last novel.

Sir James was not, we think, gifted with poetical imagination. But that lower kind of imagination which is necessary to the historian he had in large measure. It is not the business of the historian to create new worlds and to people them with new races of beings. He is to Homer and Shakspeare, to Dante and Milton, what Nollekens was to Canova, or Lawrence to Michael Angelo. The object of the historian's imitation is not within him; it is furnished from without. It is not a vision of beauty and grandeur discernible only by the eye of his own mind, but a real model which he did not make, and which he cannot alter. Yet his is not a mere mechanical imitation. The triumph of his skill is to select such parts as may produce the effect of the whole, to bring out strongly all the characteristic features, and to throw the light and shade in such a manner as may heighten the effect. This skill, as far as we can judge, from the unfinished work now before us, Sir James Mackintosh possessed in an eminent degree.

The style of this Fragment is weighty, manly, and unaffected. There are, as we have said, some expressions which seem to us harsh, and some which we think inaccurate. These would probably have been corrected, if Sir James had lived to superintend the publication. We ought to add that the printer has by no

Digitized by Google

means done his duty. One misprint, in particular, is so serious as to require notice. Sir James Mackintosh has paid a high and just tribute to the genius, the integrity, and the courage of a good and great man, a distinguished ornament of English literature, a fearless champion of English liberty, Thomas Burnet, Master of the Charter-House, and author of that most eloquent and imaginative work, the *Telluris Theoria Sacra*. Wherever the name of this celebrated man occurs, it is printed "Bennet," both in the text and in the index. This cannot be mere negligence. It is plain that Thomas Burnet and his writings were never heard of by the gentleman who has been employed to edite this volume, and who, not content with deforming Sir James Mackintosh's text by such blunders, has prefixed to it a bad Memoir, has appended to it a bad Continuation, and has thus succeeded in expanding the volume into one of the thickest, and debasing it into one of the worst that we ever saw. Never did we fall in with so admirable an illustration of the old Greek proverb, which tells us that half is sometimes more than the whole. Never did we see a case in which the increase of the bulk was so evidently a diminution of the value.

Why such an artist was selected to deface so fine a Torso, we cannot pretend to conjecture. We read that, when the Consul Mummius, after the taking of Corinth, was preparing to send to Rome some works of the greatest Grecian sculptors, he told the packers that if they broke his Venus or his Apollo, he would force them to restore the limbs which should be wanting. A head by a hewer of mile-stones joined to a bosom by Praxiteles would not surprise or shock us more than this supplement.

The Memoir contains much that is worth reading;

Digitized by Google

for it contains many extracts from the compositions of Sir James Mackintosh. But when we pass from what the biographer has done with his scissors to what he has done with his pen, we can find nothing to praise in his work. Whatever may have been the intention with which he wrote, the tendency of his narrative is to convey the impression that Sir James Mackintosh, from interested motives, abandoned the doctrines of the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*. Had such charges appeared in their natural place, we should leave them to their natural fate. We would not stoop to defend Sir James Mackintosh from the attacks of fourth-rate magazines and pothouse newspapers. But here his own fame is turned against him. A book of which not one copy would ever have been bought but for his name in the title page is made the vehicle of the imputation. Under such circumstances we cannot help exclaiming, in the words of one of the most amiable of Homer's heroes,

> "Νῦν τις ἐνηείης Πατροκλῆος δείλοῖο
> Μνησάσθω· πᾶσιν γὰρ ἐπίστατο μείλιχος εἶναι
> Ζωὸς ἐων· νῦν δ' αὖ Θάνατος καὶ Μοῖρα κιχάνει."

We have no difficulty in admitting that, during the ten or twelve years which followed the appearance of the *Vindiciæ Gallicæ*, the opinions of Sir James Mackintosh underwent some change. But did this change pass on him alone? Was it not common? Was it not almost universal? Was there one honest friend of liberty in Europe or in America whose ardour had not been damped, whose faith in the high destinies of mankind had not been shaken? Was there one observer to whom the French Revolution, or revolutions in general, appeared in exactly the same light on the day when the Bastile fell, and on the day when the Girondists were dragged to the scaffold, the day when the Directory

Digitized by Google

shipped off their principal opponents for Guiana, or the day when the Legislative Body was driven from its hall at the point of the bayonet? We do not speak of light-minded and enthusiastic people, of wits like Sheridan, or poets like Alfieri; but of the most virtuous and intelligent practical statesmen, and of the deepest, the calmest, the most impartial political speculators of that time. What was the language and conduct of Lord Spencer, of Lord Fitzwilliam, of Mr. Grattan? What is the tone of M. Dumont's Memoirs, written just at the close of the eighteenth century? What Tory could have spoken with greater disgust and contempt of the French Revolution and its authors? Nay, this writer, a republican, and the most upright and zealous of republicans, has gone so far as to say that Mr. Burke's work on the Revolution had saved Europe. The name of M. Dumont naturally suggests that of Mr. Bentham. He, we presume, was not ratting for a place; and what language did he hold at that time? Look at his little treatise entitled *Sophismes Anarchiques*. In that treatise he says, that the atrocities of the Revolution were the natural consequences of the absurd principles on which it was commenced; that, while the chiefs of the constituent assembly gloried in the thought that they were pulling down aristocracy, they never saw that their doctrines tended to produce an evil a hundred times more formidable, anarchy; that the theory laid down in the Declaration of the Rights of Man had, in a great measure, produced the crimes of the Reign of Terror; that none but an eyewitness could imagine the horrors of a state of society in which comments on that Declaration were put forth by men with no food in their bellies, with rags on their backs, and pikes in their hands. He praises the English Parliament for the dis-

Digitized by Google

like which it has always shown to abstract reasonings, and to the affirming of general principles. In M. Dumont's preface to the Treatise on the Principles of Legislation, a preface written under the eye of Mr. Bentham, and published with his sanction, are the following still more remarkable expressions: "M. Bentham est bien loin d'attacher une préférence exclusive à aucune forme de gouvernement. Il pense que la meilleure constitution pour un peuple est celle à laquelle il est accoutumé. . . . . Le vice fondamental des théories sur les constitutions politiques, c'est de commencer par attaquer celles qui existent, et d'exciter tout au moins des inquiétudes et des jalousies de pouvoir. Une telle disposition n'est point favorable au perfectionnement des lois. La seule époque où l'on puisse entreprendre avec succès des grandes réformes de législation, est celle où les passions publiques sont calmes, et où le gouvernement jouit de la stabilité la plus grande. L'objet de M. Bentham, en cherchant dans le vice des lois la cause de la plupart des maux, a été constamment d'éloigner le plus grand de tous, le bouleversement de l'autorité, les révolutions de proprieté et de pouvoir."

To so conservative a frame of mind had the excesses of the French Revolution brought the most illustrious reformers of that time. And why is one person to be singled out from among millions, and arraigned before posterity as a traitor to his opinions, only because events produced on him the effect which they produced on a whole generation? People who, like Mr. Brothers in the last generation, and Mr. Percival in this, have been favoured with revelations from heaven, may be quite independent of the vulgar sources of knowledge. But such poor creatures as Mackintosh, Dumont, and Ben-

Digitized by Google

tham, had nothing but observation and reason to guide them; and they obeyed the guidance of observation and of reason. How is it in physics? A traveller falls in with a berry which he has never before seen. He tastes it, and finds it sweet and refreshing. He praises it, and resolves to introduce it into his own country. But in a few minutes he is taken violently sick; he is convulsed; he is at the point of death. He of course changes his opinion, pronounces this delicious food a poison, blames his own folly in tasting it, and cautions his friends against it. After a long and violent struggle he recovers, and finds himself much exhausted by his sufferings, but free from some chronic complaints which had been the torment of his life. He then changes his opinion again, and pronounces this fruit a very powerful remedy, which ought to be employed only in extreme cases and with great caution, but which ought not to be absolutely excluded from the Pharmacopœia. And would it not be the height of absurdity to call such a man fickle and inconsistent, because he had repeatedly altered his judgment? If he had not altered his judgment, would he have been a rational being? It was exactly the same with the French Revolution. That event was a new phænomenon in politics. Nothing that had gone before enabled any person to judge with certainty of the course which affairs might take. At first the effect was the reform of great abuses; and honest men rejoiced. Then came commotion, proscription, confiscation, bankruptcy, the assignats, the maximum, civil war, foreign war, revolutionary tribunals, guillotinades, noyades, fusillades. Yet a little while, and a military despotism rose out of the confusion, and menaced the independence of every state in Europe. And yet again a little while, and

Digitized by Google

the old dynasty returned, followed by a train of emigrants eager to restore the old abuses. We have now, we think, the whole before us. We should therefore be justly accused of levity or insincerity if our language concerning those events were constantly changing. It is our deliberate opinion that the French Revolution, in spite of all its crimes and follies, was a great blessing to mankind. But it was not only natural, but inevitable, that those who had only seen the first act should be ignorant of the catastrophe, and should be alternately elated and depressed as the plot went on disclosing itself to them. A man who had held exactly the same opinion about the Revolution in 1789, in 1794, in 1804, in 1814, and in 1834, would have been either a divinely inspired prophet, or an obstinate fool. Mackintosh was neither. He was simply a wise and good man; and the change which passed on his mind was a change which passed on the mind of almost every wise and good man in Europe. In fact, few of his contemporaries changed so little. The rare moderation and calmness of his temper preserved him alike from extravagant elation and from extravagant despondency. He was never a Jacobin. He was never an Antijacobin. His mind oscillated undoubtedly; but the extreme points of the oscillation were not very remote. Herein he differed greatly from some persons of distinguished talents who entered into life at nearly the same time with him. Such persons we have seen rushing from one wild extreme to another, out-Paining Paine, out-Castlereagling Castlereagh, Pantisocratists, Ultra-Tories, heretics, persecutors, breaking the old laws against sedition, calling for new and sharper laws against sedition, writing democratic dramas, writing Laureate odes, panegyris-

Digitized by Google

ing Marten, panegyrising Laud, consistent in nothing but an intolerance which in any person would be censurable, but which is altogether unpardonable in men who, by their own confession, have had such ample experience of their own fallibility. We readily concede to some of these persons the praise of eloquence and poetical invention; nor are we by any means disposed, even where they have been gainers by their conversion, to question their sincerity. It would be most uncandid to attribute to sordid motives actions which admit of a less discreditable explanation. We think that the conduct of these persons has been precisely what was to be expected from men who were gifted with strong imagination and quick sensibility, but who were neither accurate observers nor logical reasoners. It was natural that such men should see in the victory of the third estate of France the dawn of a new Saturnian age. It was natural that the rage of their disappointment should be proportioned to the extravagance of their hopes. Though the direction of their passions was altered, the violence of those passions was the same. The force of the rebound was proportioned to the force of the original impulse. The pendulum swung furiously to the left, because it had been drawn too far to the right.

We own that nothing gives us so high an idea of the judgment and temper of Sir James Mackintosh as the manner in which he shaped his course through those times. Exposed successively to two opposite infections, he took both in their very mildest form. The constitution of his mind was such that neither of the diseases which wrought such havoc all round him could in any serious degree, or for any great length of time, derange his intellectual health. He,

Digitized by Google

like every honest and enlightened man in Europe, saw with delight the great awakening of the French nation. Yet he never, in the season of his warmest enthusiasm, proclaimed doctrines inconsistent with the safety of property and the just authority of governments. He, like almost every other honest and enlightened man, was discouraged and perplexed by the terrible events which followed. Yet he never in the most gloomy times abandoned the cause of peace, of liberty, and of toleration. In that great convulsion which overset almost every other understanding, he was indeed so much shaken that he leaned sometimes in one direction and sometimes in the other; but he never lost his balance. The opinions in which he at last reposed, and to which, in spite of strong temptations, he adhered with a firm, a disinterested, an ill-requited fidelity, were a just mean between those which he had defended with youthful ardour and with more than manly prowess against Mr. Burke, and those to which he had inclined during the darkest and saddest years in the history of modern Europe. We are much mistaken if this be the picture either of a weak or of a dishonest mind.

What the political opinions of Sir James Mackintosh were in his later years is written in the annals of his country. Those annals will sufficiently refute what the Editor has ventured to assert in the very advertisement to this work. "Sir James Mackintosh," says he, "was avowedly and emphatically a Whig of the Revolution: and since the agitation of religious liberty and parliamentary reform became a national movement, the great transaction of 1688 has been more dispassionately, more correctly, and less highly estimated." If these words mean any thing, they must

Digitized by Google

mean that the opinions of Sir James Mackintosh concerning religious liberty and parliamentary reform went no further than those of the authors of the Revolution; in other words, that Sir James Mackintosh opposed Catholic Emancipation, and approved of the old constitution of the House of Commons. The allegation is confuted by twenty volumes of Parliamentary Debates, nay by innumerable passages in the very Fragment which this writer has defaced. We will venture to say that Sir James Mackintosh often did more for religious liberty and for parliamentary reform in a quarter of an hour, than most of those zealots who are in the habit of depreciating him, have done or will do in the whole course of their lives.

Nothing in the Memoir, or in the Continuation of the History, has struck us so much as the contempt with which the writer thinks fit to speak of all things that were done before the coming in of the very last fashions in politics. We think that we have sometimes observed a leaning towards the same fault in writers of a much higher order of intellect. We will therefore take this opportunity of making a few remarks on an error which is, we fear, becoming common, and which appears to us not only absurd, but as pernicious as almost any error concerning the transactions of a past age can possibly be.

We shall not, we hope, be suspected of a bigoted attachment to the doctrines and practices of past generations. Our creed is that the science of government is an experimental science, and that, like all other experimental sciences, it is generally in a state of progression. No man is so obstinate an admirer of the old times as to deny that medicine, surgery, botany, chemistry, engineering, navigation, are better under-

Digitized by Google

stood now than in any former age. We conceive that it is the same with political science. Like those physical sciences which we have mentioned, it has always been working itself clearer and clearer, and depositing impurity after impurity. There was a time when the most powerful of human intellects were deluded by the gibberish of the astrologer and the alchemist; and just so there was a time when the most enlightened and virtuous statesmen thought it the first duty of a government to persecute heretics, to found monasteries, to make war on Saracens. But time advances; facts accumulate; doubts arise. Faint glimpses of truth begin to appear, and shine more and more unto the perfect day. The highest intellects, like the tops of mountains, are the first to catch and to reflect the dawn. They are bright, while the level below is still in darkness. But soon the light, which at first illuminated only the loftiest eminences, descends on the plain and penetrates to the deepest valley. First come hints, then fragments of systems, then defective systems, then complete and harmonious systems. The sound opinion, held for a time by one bold speculator, becomes the opinion of a small minority, of a strong minority, of a majority of mankind. Thus, the great progress goes on, till schoolboys laugh at the jargon which imposed on Bacon, till country rectors condemn the illiberality and intolerance of Sir Thomas More.

Seeing these things, seeing that, by the confession of the most obstinate enemies of innovation, our race has hitherto been almost constantly advancing in knowledge, and not seeing any reason to believe that, precisely at the point of time at which we came into the world, a change took place in the faculties of the human mind, or in the mode of discovering truth, we

Digitized by Google

are reformers: we are on the side of progress. From the great advances which European society has made, during the last four centuries, in every species of knowledge, we infer, not that there is no more room for improvement, but that, in every science which deserves the name, immense improvements may be confidently expected.

But the very considerations which lead us to look forward with sanguine hope to the future prevent us from looking back with contempt on the past. We do not flatter ourselves with the notion that we have attained perfection, and that no more truth remains to be found. We believe that we are wiser than our ancestors. We believe, also, that our posterity will be wiser than we. It would be gross injustice in our grandchildren to talk of us with contempt, merely because they may have surpassed us; to call Watt a fool, because mechanical powers may be discovered which may supersede the use of steam; to deride the efforts which have been made in our time to improve the discipline of prisons, and to enlighten the minds of the poor, because future philanthropists may devise better places of confinement than Mr. Bentham's Panopticon, and better places of education than Mr. Lancaster's Schools. As we would have our descendants judge us, so ought we to judge our fathers. In order to form a correct estimate of their merits, we ought to place ourselves in their situation, to put out of our minds, for a time, all that knowledge which they, however eager in the pursuit of truth, could not have, and which we, however negligent we may have been, could not help having. It was not merely difficult, but absolutely impossible, for the best and greatest of men, two hundred years ago, to be what a very commonplace per-

Digitized by Google

son in our days may easily be, and indeed must necessarily be. But it is too much that the benefactors of mankind, after having been reviled by the dunces of their own generation for going too far, should be reviled by the dunces of the next generation for not going far enough.

The truth lies between two absurd extremes. On one side is the bigot who pleads the wisdom of our ancestors as a reason for not doing what they in our place would be the first to do; who opposes the Reform Bill because Lord Somers did not see the necessity of Parliamentary Reform; who would have opposed the Revolution because Ridley and Cranmer professed boundless submission to the royal prerogative; and who would have opposed the Reformation because the Fitzwalters and Mareschals, whose seals are set to the Great Charter, were devoted adherents to the Church of Rome. On the other side is the sciolist who speaks with scorn of the Great Charter, because it did not reform the Church; of the Reformation, because it did not limit the prerogative; and of the Revolution, because it did not purify the House of Commons. The former of these errors we have often combated, and shall always be ready to combat. The latter, though rapidly spreading, has not, we think, yet come under our notice. The former error bears directly on practical questions, and obstructs useful reforms. It may, therefore, seem to be, and probably is, the more mischievous of the two. But the latter is equally absurd; it is at least equally symptomatic of a shallow understanding and an unamiable temper: and, if it should ever become general, it will, we are satisfied, produce very prejudicial effects. Its tendency is to deprive the benefactors of mankind of

Digitized by Google

their honest fame, and to put the best and the worst men of past times on the same level. The author of a great reformation is almost always unpopular in his own age. He generally passes his life in disquiet and danger. It is therefore for the interest of the human race that the memory of such men should be had in reverence, and that they should be supported against the scorn and hatred of their contemporaries by the hope of leaving a great and imperishable name. To go on the forlorn hope of truth is a service of peril. Who will undertake it, if it be not also a service of honour? It is easy enough, after the ramparts are carried, to find men to plant the flag on the highest tower. The difficulty is to find men who are ready to go first into the breach; and it would be bad policy indeed to insult their remains because they fell in the breach, and did not live to penetrate to the citadel.

Now here we have a book which is by no means a favourable specimen of the English literature of the nineteenth century, a book indicating neither extensive knowledge nor great powers of reasoning. And, if we were to judge by the pity with which the writer speaks of the great statesmen and philosophers of a former age, we should guess that he was the author of the most original and important inventions in political science. Yet not so: for men who are able to make discoveries are generally disposed to make allowances. Men who are eagerly pressing forward in pursuit of truth are grateful to every one who has cleared an inch of the way for them. It is, for the most part, the man who has just capacity enough to pick up and repeat the commonplaces which are fashionable in his own time who looks with disdain on the very intellects to which it is owing that those

Digitized by Google

commonplaces are not still considered as startling paradoxes or damnable heresies. This writer is just the man who, if he had lived in the seventeenth century, would have devoutly believed that the Papists burned London, who would have swallowed the whole of Oates's story about the forty thousand soldiers, disguised as pilgrims, who were to meet in Gallicia, and sail thence to invade England, who would have carried a Protestant flail under his coat, and who would have been angry if the story of the warmingpan had been questioned. It is quite natural that such a man should speak with contempt of the great reformers of that time, because they did not know some things which he never would have known but for the salutary effects of their exertions. The men to whom we owe it that we have a House of Commons are sneered at because they did not suffer the debates of the House to be published. The authors of the Toleration Act are treated as bigots, because they did not go the whole length of Catholic Emancipation. Just so we have heard a baby, mounted on the shoulders of its father, cry out, "How much taller I am than Papa!"

This gentleman can never want matter for pride, if he finds it so easily. He may boast of an indisputable superiority to all the greatest men of all past ages. He can read and write: Homer probably did not know a letter. He has been taught that the earth goes round the sun: Archimedes held that the sun went round the earth. He is aware that there is a place called New Holland: Columbus and Gama went to their graves in ignorance of the fact. He has heard of the Georgium Sidus: Newton was ignorant of the existence of such a planet. He is acquainted with the use of gunpowder: Hannibal and Cæsar won their

Digitized by Google

victories with sword and spear. We submit, however, that this is not the way in which men are to be estimated. We submit that a wooden spoon of our day would not be justified in calling Galileo and Napier blockheads, because they never heard of the differential calculus. We submit that Caxton's press in Westminster Abbey, rude as it is, ought to be looked at with quite as much respect as the best constructed machinery that ever, in our time, impressed the clearest type on the finest paper. Sydenham first discovered that the cool regimen succeeded best in cases of small-pox. By this discovery he saved the lives of hundreds of thousands; and we venerate his memory for it, though he never heard of inoculation. Lady Mary Montague brought inoculation into use; and we respect her for it, though she never heard of vaccination. Jenner introduced vaccination; we admire him for it, and we shall continue to admire him for it, although some still safer and more agreeable preservative should be discovered. It is thus that we ought to judge of the events and the men of other times. They were behind us. It could not be otherwise. But the question with respect to them is not where they were, but which way they were going. Were their faces set in the right or in the wrong direction? Were they in the front or in the rear of their generation? Did they exert themselves to help onward the great movement of the human race, or to stop it? This is not charity, but simple justice and common sense. It is the fundamental law of the world in which we live that truth shall grow, first the blade, then the ear, after that the full corn in the ear. A person who complains of the men of 1688 for not having been men of 1835 might just as well complain of a projectile for describing

Digitized by Google

a parabola, or of quicksilver for being heavier than water.

Undoubtedly we ought to look at ancient transactions by the light of modern knowledge. Undoubtedly it is among the first duties of a historian to point out the faults of the eminent men of former generations. There are no errors which are so likely to be drawn into precedent, and therefore none which it is so necessary to expose, as the errors of persons who have a just title to the gratitude and admiration of posterity. In politics, as in religion, there are devotees who show their reverence for a departed saint by converting his tomb into a sanctuary for crime. Receptacles of wickedness are suffered to remain undisturbed in the neighbourhood of the church which glories in the relics of some martyred apostle. Because he was merciful, his bones give security to assassins. Because he was chaste, the precinct of his temple is filled with licensed stews. Privileges of an equally absurd kind have been set up against the jurisdiction of political philosophy. Vile abuses cluster thick round every glorious event, round every venerable name; and this evil assuredly calls for vigorous measures of literary police. But the proper course is to abate the nuisance without defacing the shrine, to drive out the gangs of thieves and prostitutes without doing foul and cowardly wrong to the ashes of the illustrious dead.

In this respect, two historians of our own time may be proposed as models, Sir James Mackintosh and Mr. Mill. Differing in most things, in this they closely resemble each other. Sir James is lenient. Mr. Mill is severe. But neither of them ever omits, in the apportioning of praise and of censure, to make ample allowance for the state of political science and political moral-

Digitized by Google

ity in former ages. In the work before us, Sir James Mackintosh speaks with just respect of the Whigs of the Revolution, while he never fails to condemn the conduct of that party towards the members of the Church of Rome. His doctrines are the liberal and benevolent doctrines of the nineteenth century. But he never forgets that the men whom he is describing were men of the seventeenth century.

From Mr. Mill this indulgence, or, to speak more properly, this justice, was less to be expected. That gentleman, in some of his works, appears to consider politics not as an experimental, and therefore a progressive science, but as a science of which all the difficulties may be resolved by short synthetical arguments drawn from truths of the most vulgar notoriety. Were this opinion well founded, the people of one generation would have little or no advantage over those of another generation. But though Mr. Mill, in some of his Essays, has been thus misled, as we conceive, by a fondness for neat and precise forms of demonstration, it would be gross injustice not to admit that, in his History, he has employed a very different method of investigation with eminent ability and success. We know no writer who takes so much pleasure in the truly useful, noble, and philosophical employment of tracing the progress of sound opinions from their embryo state to their full maturity. He eagerly culls from old despatches and minutes every expression in which he can discern the imperfect germ of any great truth which has since been fully developed. He never fails to bestow praise on those who, though far from coming up to his standard of perfection, yet rose in a small degree above the common level of their contemporaries. It is thus that the annals of past times ought to be writ-

Digitized by Google

ten. It is thus, especially, that the annals of our own country ought to be written.

The history of England is emphatically the history of progress. It is the history of a constant movement of the public mind, of a constant change in the institutions of a great society. We see that society, at the beginning of the twelfth century, in a state more miserable than the state in which the most degraded nations of the East now are. We see it subjected to the tyranny of a handful of armed foreigners. We see a strong distinction of caste separating the victorious Norman from the vanquished Saxon. We see the great body of the population in a state of personal slavery. We see the most debasing and cruel superstition exercising boundless dominion over the most elevated and benevolent minds. We see the multitude sunk in brutal ignorance, and the studious few engaged in acquiring what did not deserve the name of knowledge. In the course of seven centuries the wretched and degraded race have become the greatest and most highly civilised people that ever the world saw, have spread their dominion over every quarter of the globe, have scattered the seeds of mighty empires and republics over vast continents of which no dim intimation had ever reached Ptolemy or Strabo, have created a maritime power which would annihilate in a quarter of an hour the navies of Tyre, Athens, Carthage, Venice, and Genoa together, have carried the science of healing, the means of locomotion and correspondence, every mechanical art, every manufacture, every thing that promotes the convenience of life, to a perfection which our ancestors would have thought magical, have produced a literature which may boast of works not inferior to the noblest which Greece has

Digitized by Google

bequeathed to us, have discovered the laws which regulate the motions of the heavenly bodies, have speculated with exquisite subtilty on the operations of the human mind, have been the acknowledged leaders of the human race in the career of political improvement. The history of England is the history of this great change in the moral, intellectual, and physical state of the inhabitants of our own island. There is much amusing and instructive episodical matter; but this is the main action. To us, we will own, nothing is so interesting and delightful as to contemplate the steps by which the England of Domesday Book, the England of the Curfew and the Forest Laws, the England of crusaders, monks, schoolmen, astrologers, serfs, outlaws, became the England which we know and love, the classic ground of liberty and philosophy, the school of all knowledge, the mart of all trade. The Charter of Henry Beauclerk, the Great Charter, the first assembling of the House of Commons, the extinction of personal slavery, the separation from the See of Rome, the Petition of Right, the Habeas Corpus Act, the Revolution, the establishment of the liberty of unlicensed printing, the abolition of religious disabilities, the reform of the representative system, all these seem to us to be the successive stages of one great revolution; nor can we fully comprehend any one of these memorable events unless we look at it in connection with those which preceded, and with those which followed it. Each of those great and ever memorable struggles, Saxon against Norman, Villein against Lord, Protestant against Papist, Roundhead against Cavalier, Dissenter against Churchman, Manchester against Old Sarum, was, in its own order and season, a struggle, on the result of which were staked the dearest interests of the

Digitized by Google

human race; and every man who, in the contest which, in his time, divided our country, distinguished himself on the right side, is entitled to our gratitude and respect.

Whatever the editor of this book may think, those persons who estimate most correctly the value of the improvements which have recently been made in our institutions, are precisely the persons who are least disposed to speak slightingly of what was done in 1688. Such men consider the Revolution as a reform, imperfect indeed, but still most beneficial to the English people and to the human race, as a reform which has been the fruitful parent of reforms, as a reform, the happy effects of which are at this moment felt, not only throughout our own country, but in half the monarchies of Europe, and in the depths of the forests of Ohio. We shall be pardoned, we hope, if we call the attention of our readers to the causes and to the consequences of that great event.

We said that the history of England is the history of progress; and, when we take a comprehensive view of it, it is so. But, when examined in small separate portions, it may with more propriety be called a history of actions and re-actions. We have often thought that the motion of the public mind in our country resembles that of the sea when the tide is rising. Each successive wave rushes forward, breaks, and rolls back; but the great flood is steadily coming in. A person who looked on the waters only for a moment might fancy that they were retiring. A person who looked on them only for five minutes might fancy that they were rushing capriciously to and fro. But when he keeps his eye on them for a quarter of an hour, and sees one sea-mark disappear after another, it is impossible for him to doubt of the general direction in which

Digitized by Google

the ocean is moved. Just such has been the course of events in England. In the history of the national mind, which is, in truth, the history of the nation, we must carefully distinguish between that recoil which regularly follows every advance and a great general ebb. If we take short intervals, if we compare 1640 and 1660, 1680 and 1685, 1708 and 1712, 1782 and 1794, we find a retrogression. But if we take centuries, if, for example, we compare 1794 with 1660 or with 1685, we cannot doubt in which direction society is proceeding.

The interval which elapsed between the Restoration and the Revolution naturally divides itself into three periods. The first extends from 1660 to 1678, the second from 1678 to 1681, the third from 1681 to 1688.

In 1660 the whole nation was mad with loyal excitement. If we had to choose a lot from among all the multitude of those which men have drawn since the beginning of the world, we would select that of Charles the Second on the day of his return. He was in a situation in which the dictates of ambition coincided with those of benevolence, in which it was easier to be virtuous than to be wicked, to be loved, than to be hated, to earn pure and imperishable glory than to become infamous. For once the road of goodness was a smooth descent. He had done nothing to merit the affection of his people. But they had paid him in advance without measure. Elizabeth, after the destruction of the Armada, or after the abolition of monopolies, had not excited a thousandth part of the enthusiasm with which the young exile was welcomed home. He was not, like Lewis the Eighteenth, imposed on his subjects by foreign conquerors; nor did he, like Lewis the Eighteenth, come back to a country

Digitized by Google

which had undergone a complete change. The house of Bourbon was placed in Paris as a trophy of the victory of the European confederation. The return of the ancient princes was inseparably associated in the public mind with the cession of extensive provinces, with the payment of an immense tribute, with the devastation of flourishing departments, with the occupation of the kingdom by hostile armies, with the emptiness of those niches in which the gods of Athens and Rome had been the objects of a new idolatry, with the nakedness of those walls on which the Transfiguration had shone with light as glorious as that which overhung Mount Tabor. They came back to a land in which they could recognise nothing. The seven sleepers of the legend, who closed their eyes when the Pagans were persecuting the Christians, and woke when the Christians were persecuting each other, did not find themselves in a world more completely new to them. Twenty years had done the work of twenty generations. Events had come thick. Men had lived fast. The old institutions and the old feelings had been torn up by the roots. There was a new Church founded and endowed by the usurper; a new nobility whose titles were taken from fields of battle, disastrous to the ancient line; a new chivalry whose crosses had been won by exploits which had seemed likely to make the banishment of the emigrants perpetual. A new code was administered by a new magistracy. A new body of proprietors held the soil by a new tenure. The most ancient local distinctions had been effaced. The most familiar names had become obsolete. There was no longer a Normandy or a Burgundy, a Brittany or a Guienne. The France of Lewis the Sixteenth had passed away as completely as one of the Preadamite

Digitized by Google

worlds. Its fossil remains might now and then excite curiosity. But it was as impossible to put life into the old institutions as to animate the skeletons which are embedded in the depths of primeval strata. It was as absurd to think that France could again be placed under the feudal system, as that our globe could be overrun by mammoths. The revolution in the laws and in the form of government was but an outward sign of that mightier revolution which had taken place in the heart and brain of the people, and which affected every transaction of life, trading, farming, studying, marrying, and giving in marriage. The French whom the emigrant prince had to govern were no more like the French of his youth, than the French of his youth were like the French of the Jaquerie. He came back to a people who knew not him nor his house, to a people to whom a Bourbon was no more than a Carlovingian or a Merovingian. He might substitute the white flag for the tricolor; he might put lilies in the place of bees; he might order the initials of the Emperor to be carefully effaced. But he could turn his eyes nowhere without meeting some object which reminded him that he was a stranger in the palace of his fathers. He returned to a country in which even the passing traveller is every moment reminded that there has lately been a great dissolution and reconstruction of the social system. To win the hearts of a people, under such circumstances, would have been no easy task even for Henry the Fourth.

In the English Revolution the case was altogether different. Charles was not imposed on his countrymen, but sought by them. His restoration was not attended by any circumstance which could inflict a wound on their national pride. Insulated by our geographical

Digitized by Google

position, insulated by our character, we had fought out our quarrels and effected our reconciliation among ourselves. Our great internal questions had never been mixed up with the still greater question of national independence. The political doctrines of the Roundheads were not, like those of the French philosophers, doctrines of universal application. Our ancestors, for the most part, took their stand, not on a general theory, but on the particular constitution of the realm. They asserted the rights, not of men, but of Englishmen. Their doctrines therefore were not contagious; and, had it been otherwise, no neighbouring country was then susceptible of the contagion. The language in which our discussions were generally conducted was scarcely known even to a single man of letters out of the islands. Our local situation made it almost impossible that we should effect great conquests on the Continent. The kings of Europe had, therefore, no reason to fear that their subjects would follow the example of the English Puritans, and looked with indifference, perhaps with complacency, on the death of the monarch and the abolition of the monarchy. Clarendon complains bitterly of their apathy. But we believe that this apathy was of the greatest service to the royal cause. If a French or Spanish army had invaded England, and if that army had been cut to pieces, as we have no doubt that it would have been, on the first day on which it came face to face with the soldiers of Preston and Dunbar, with Colonel-Fight-the-good-Fight, and Captain Smite-them-hip-and-thigh, the House of Cromwell would probably now have been reigning in England. The nation would have forgotten all the misdeeds of the man who had cleared the soil of foreign invaders.

Digitized by Google

Happily for Charles, no European state, even when at war with the Commonwealth, chose to bind up its cause with that of the wanderers who were playing in the garrets of Paris and Cologne at being princes and chancellors. Under the administration of Cromwell, England was more respected and dreaded than any power in Christendom; and, even under the ephemeral governments which followed his death, no foreign state ventured to treat her with contempt. Thus Charles came back, not as a mediator between his people and a victorious enemy, but as a mediator between internal factions. He found the Scotch Covenanters and the Irish Papists alike subdued. He found Dunkirk and Jamaica added to the empire. He was heir to the conquests and to the influence of the able usurper who had excluded him.

The old government of England, as it had been far milder than the old government of France, had been far less violently and completely subverted. The national institutions had been spared, or imperfectly eradicated. The laws had undergone little alteration. The tenures of the soil were still to be learned from Littleton and Coke. The Great Charter was mentioned with as much reverence in the parliaments of the Commonwealth as in those of any earlier or of any later age. A new Confession of Faith and a new ritual had been introduced into the church. But the bulk of the ecclesiastical property still remained. The colleges still held their estates. The parson still received his tithes. The Lords had, at a crisis of great excitement, been excluded by military violence from their House; but they retained their titles and an ample share of the public veneration. When a nobleman made his appearance in the House of Commons he was received with cere-

Digitized by Google

monious respect. Those few Peers who consented to assist at the inauguration of the Protector were placed next to himself, and the most honourable offices of the day were assigned to them. We learn from the debates of Richard's Parliament how strong a hold the old aristocracy had on the affections of the people. One member of the House of Commons went so far as to say that, unless their Lordships were peaceably restored, the country might soon be convulsed by a war of the Barons. There was indeed no great party hostile to the Upper House. There was nothing exclusive in the constitution of that body. It was regularly recruited from among the most distinguished of the country gentlemen, the lawyers, and the clergy. The most powerful nobles of the century which preceded the civil war, the Duke of Somerset, the Duke of Northumberland, Lord Seymour of Sudeley, the Earl of Leicester, Lord Burleigh, the Earl of Salisbury, the Duke of Buckingham, the Earl of Strafford, had all been commoners, and had all raised themselves, by courtly arts or by parliamentary talents, not merely to seats in the House of Lords, but to the first influence in that assembly. Nor had the general conduct of the Peers been such as to make them unpopular. They had not, indeed, in opposing arbitrary measures shown so much eagerness and pertinacity as the Commons. But still they had opposed those measures. They had, at the beginning of the discontents, a common interest with the people. If Charles had succeeded in his scheme of governing without parliaments, the consequence of the Peers would have been grievously diminished. If he had been able to raise taxes by his own authority, the estates of the Peers would have been as much at his mercy as those of the merchants or the farmers. If he had ob-

Digitized by Google

tained the power of imprisoning his subjects at his pleasure, a Peer ran far greater risk of incurring the royal displeasure, and of being accommodated with apartments in the Tower, than any city trader or country squire. Accordingly Charles found that the Great Council of Peers which he convoked at York would do nothing for him. In the most useful reforms which were made during the first session of the Long Parliament, the Peers concurred heartily with the Lower House; and a large and powerful minority of the English nobles stood by the popular side through the first years of the war. At Edgehill, Newbury, Marston, and Naseby, the armies of the Parliament were commanded by members of the aristocracy. It was not forgotten that a Peer had imitated the example of Hampden in refusing the payment of the ship-money, or that a Peer had been among the six members of the legislature whom Charles illegally impeached.

Thus the old constitution of England was without difficulty reestablished; and of all the parts of the old constitution the monarchical part was, at the time, dearest to the body of the people. It had been injudiciously depressed, and it was in consequence unduly exalted. From the day when Charles the First became a prisoner had commenced a reaction in favour of his person and of his office. From the day when the axe fell on his neck before the windows of his palace, that reaction became rapid and violent. At the Restoration it had attained such a point that it could go no further. The people were ready to place at the mercy of their Sovereign all their most ancient and precious rights. The most servile doctrines were publicly avowed. The most moderate and constitutional opposition was condemned. Resistance was spoken of with

Digitized by Google

more horror than any crime which a human being can commit. The Commons were more eager than the King himself to avenge the wrongs of the royal house; more desirous than the bishops themselves to restore the church; more ready to give money than the ministers to ask for it. They abrogated the excellent law passed in the first session of the Long Parliament, with the general consent of all honest men, to insure the frequent meeting of the great council of the nation. They might probably have been induced to go further, and to restore the High Commission and the Star Chamber. All the contemporary accounts represent the nation as in a state of hysterical excitement, of drunken joy. In the immense multitude which crowded the beach at Dover, and bordered the road along which the King travelled to London, there was not one who was not weeping. Bonfires blazed. Bells jingled. The streets were thronged at night by boon-companions, who forced all the passers-by to swallow on bended knees brimming glasses to the health of his Most Sacred Majesty, and the damnation of Red-nosed Noll. That tenderness to the fallen which has, through many generations, been a marked feature of the national character, was for a time hardly discernible. All London crowded to shout and laugh round the gibbet where hung the rotting remains of a prince who had made England the dread of the world, who had been the chief founder of her maritime greatness and of her colonial empire, who had conquered Scotland and Ireland, who had humbled Holland and Spain, the terror of whose name had been as a guard round every English traveller in remote countries, and round every Protestant congregation in the heart of Catholic empires. When some of those brave and hon-

Digitized by Google

est though misguided men who had sat in judgment on their King were dragged on hurdles to a death of prolonged torture, their last prayers were interrupted by the hisses and execrations of thousands.

Such was England in 1660. In 1678 the whole face of things had changed. At the former of those epochs eighteen years of commotion had made the majority of the people ready to buy repose at any price. At the latter epoch eighteen years of misgovernment had made the same majority desirous to obtain security for their liberties at any risk. The fury of their returning loyalty had spent itself in its first outbreak. In a very few months they had hanged and half-hanged, quartered and embowelled enough to satisfy them. The Roundhead party seemed to be not merely overcome, but too much broken and scattered ever to rally again. Then commenced the reflux of public opinion. The nation began to find out to what a man it had intrusted without conditions, all its dearest interests, on what a man it had lavished all its fondest affection. On the ignoble nature of the restored exile, adversity had exhausted all her discipline in vain. He had one immense advantage over most other princes. Though born in the purple, he was far better acquainted with the vicissitudes of life and the diversities of character than most of his subjects. He had known restraint, danger, penury, and dependence. He had often suffered from ingratitude, insolence, and treachery. He had received many signal proofs of faithful and heroic attachment. He had seen, if ever man saw, both sides of human nature. But only one side remained in his memory. He had learned only to despise and to distrust his species, to consider integrity in men, and modesty in women, as mere acting; nor did he think it worth

Digitized by Google

while to keep his opinion to himself. He was incapable of friendship; yet he was perpetually led by favourites without being in the smallest degree duped by them. He knew that their regard to his interests was all simulated; but from a certain easiness which had no connection with humanity, he submitted, half-laughing at himself, to be made the tool of any woman whose person attracted him, or of any man whose tattle diverted him. He thought little and cared less about religion. He seems to have passed his life in dawdling suspense between Hobbism and Popery. He was crowned in his youth with the Covenant in his hand; he died at last with the Host sticking in his throat; and, during most of the intermediate years, was occupied in persecuting both Covenanters and Catholics. He was not a tyrant from the ordinary motives. He valued power for its own sake little, and fame still less. He does not appear to have been vindictive, or to have found any pleasing excitement in cruelty. What he wanted was to be amused, to get through the twenty-four hours pleasantly without sitting down to dry business. Sauntering was, as Sheffield expresses it, the true Sultana Queen of his Majesty's affections. A sitting in council would have been insupportable to him if the Duke of Buckingham had not been there to make mouths at the Chancellor. It has been said, and is highly probable, that in his exile he was quite disposed to sell his rights to Cromwell for a good round sum. To the last, his only quarrel with his Parliaments was that they often gave him trouble, and would not always give him money. If there was a person for whom he felt a real regard, that person was his brother. If there was a point about which he really entertained a scruple of conscience or of honour, that point was the descent

Digitized by Google

of the crown. Yet he was willing to consent to the Exclusion Bill for six hundred thousand pounds; and the negotiation was broken off only because he insisted on being paid beforehand. To do him justice, his temper was good; his manners agreeable; his natural talents above mediocrity. But he was sensual, frivolous, false, and cold-hearted, beyond almost any prince of whom history makes mention.

Under the government of such a man, the English people could not be long in recovering from the intoxication of loyalty. They were then, as they are still, a brave, proud, and high-spirited race, unaccustomed to defeat, to shame, or to servitude. The splendid administration of Oliver had taught them to consider their country as a match for the greatest empires of the earth, as the first of maritime powers, as the head of the Protestant interest. Though, in the day of their affectionate enthusiasm, they might sometimes extol the royal prerogative in terms which would have better become the courtiers of Aurungzebe, they were not men whom it was quite safe to take at their word. They were much more perfect in the theory than in the practice of passive obedience. Though they might deride the austere manners and scriptural phrases of the Puritans they were still at heart a religious people. The majority saw no great sin in field-sports, stage-plays, promiscuous dancing, cards, fairs, starch, or false hair. But gross profaneness and licentiousness were regarded with general horror; and the Catholic religion was held in utter detestation by nine tenths of the middle class.

Such was the nation which, awaking from its rapturous trance, found itself sold to a foreign, a despotic, a Popish court, defeated on its own seas and rivers

Digitized by Google

by a state of far inferior resources, and placed under the rule of pandars and buffoons. Our ancestors saw the best and ablest divines of the age turned out of their benefices by hundreds. They saw the prisons filled with men guilty of no other crime than that of worshipping God according to the fashion generally prevailing throughout Protestant Europe. They saw a Popish Queen on the throne, and a Popish heir on the steps of the throne. They saw unjust aggression followed by feeble war, and feeble war ending in disgraceful peace. They saw a Dutch fleet riding triumphant in the Thames. They saw the Triple Alliance broken, the Exchequer shut up, the public credit shaken, the arms of England employed, in shameful subordination to France, against a country which seemed to be the last asylum of civil and religious liberty. They saw Ireland discontented, and Scotland in rebellion. They saw, meantime, Whitehall swarming with sharpers and courtesans. They saw harlot after harlot, and bastard after bastard, not only raised to the highest honours of the peerage, but supplied out of the spoils of the honest, industrious, and ruined public creditor, with ample means of supporting the new dignity. The government became more odious every day. Even in the bosom of that very House of Commons which had been elected by the nation in the ecstasy of its penitence, of its joy, and of its hope, an opposition sprang up and became powerful. Loyalty which had been proof against all the disasters of the civil war, which had survived the routs of Naseby and Worcester, which had never flinched from sequestration and exile, which the Protector could never intimidate or seduce, began to fail in this last and hardest trial. The storm had long been gathering. At

Digitized by Google

length it burst with a fury which threatened the whole frame of society with dissolution.

When the general election of January, 1679, took place, the nation had retraced the path which it had been describing from 1640 to 1660. It was again in the same mood in which it had been when, after twelve years of misgovernment, the Long Parliament assembled. In every part of the country, the name of courtier had become a by-word of reproach. The old warriors of the Covenant again ventured out of those retreats in which they had, at the time of the Restoration, hidden themselves from the insults of the triumphant Malignants, and in which, during twenty years, they had preserved in full vigour

> "The unconquerable will
> And study of revenge, immortal hate,
> With courage never to submit or yield,
> And what is else not to be overcome."

Then were again seen in the streets faces which called up strange and terrible recollections of the days when the saints, with the high praises of God in their mouths, and a two-edged sword in their hands, had bound kings with chains, and nobles with links of iron. Then were again heard voices which had shouted "Privilege" by the coach of Charles I. in the time of his tyranny, and had called for "Justice" in Westminster Hall on the day of his trial. It has been the fashion to represent the excitement of this period as the effect of the Popish plot. To us it seems clear that the Popish plot was rather the effect than the cause of the general agitation. It was not the disease, but a symptom, though, like many other symptoms, it aggravated the severity of the disease. In 1660 or 1661 it would have been utterly out of

Digitized by Google

the power of such men as Oates or Bedloe to give any serious disturbance to the Government. They would have been laughed at, pilloried, well pelted, soundly whipped, and speedily forgotten. In 1678 or 1679 there would have been an outbreak, if those men had never been born. For years things had been steadily tending to such a consummation. Society was one vast mass of combustible matter. No mass so vast and so combustible ever waited long for a spark.

Rational men, we suppose, are now fully agreed that by far the greater part, if not the whole, of Oates's story was a pure fabrication. It is indeed highly probable that, during his intercourse with the Jesuits, he may have heard much wild talk about the best means of reestablishing the Catholic religion in England, and that from some of the absurd day-dreams of the zealots with whom he then associated he may have taken hints for his narrative. But we do not believe that he was privy to any thing which deserved the name of conspiracy. And it is quite certain that, if there be any small portion of truth in his evidence, that portion is so deeply buried in falsehood that no human skill can now effect a separation. We must not, however, forget, that we see his story by the light of much information which his contemporaries did not at first possess. We have nothing to say for the witnesses, but something in mitigation to offer on behalf of the public. We own that the credulity which the nation showed on that occasion seems to us, though censurable indeed, yet not wholly inexcusable.

Our ancestors knew, from the experience of several generations at home and abroad, how restless and encroaching was the disposition of the Church of Rome.

Digitized by Google

The heir-apparent of the crown was a bigoted member of that church. The reigning King seemed far more inclined to show favour to that church than to the Presbyterians. He was the intimate ally, or rather the hired servant, of a powerful King, who had already given proofs of his determination to tolerate within his dominions no other religion than that of Rome. The Catholics had begun to talk a bolder language than formerly, and to anticipate the restoration of their worship in all its ancient dignity and splendour. At this juncture, it is rumoured that a Popish plot has been discovered. A distinguished Catholic is arrested on suspicion. It appears that he has destroyed almost all his papers. A few letters, however, have escaped the flames; and these letters are found to contain much alarming matter, strange expressions about subsidies from France, allusions to a vast scheme which would "give the greatest blow to the Protestant religion that it had ever received," and which "would utterly subdue a pestilent heresy." It was natural that those who saw these expressions, in letters which had been overlooked, should suspect that there was some horrible villany in those which had been carefully destroyed. Such was the feeling of the House of Commons: "Question, question, Coleman's letters!" was the cry which drowned the voices of the minority.

Just after the discovery of these papers, a magistrate who had been distinguished by his independent spirit, and who had taken the deposition of the informer, is found murdered, under circumstances which make it almost incredible that he should have fallen either by robbers or by his own hands. Many of our readers can remember the state of London just after the murders

Digitized by Google

of Mar and Williamson, the terror which was on every face, the careful barring of doors, the providing of blunderbusses and watchmen's rattles. We know of a shopkeeper who on that occasion sold three hundred rattles in about ten hours. Those who remember that panic may be able to form some notion of the state of England after the death of Godfrey. Indeed, we must say that, after having read and weighed all the evidence now extant on that mysterious subject, we incline to the opinion that he was assassinated, and assassinated by Catholics, not assuredly by Catholics of the least weight or note, but by some of those crazy and vindictive fanatics who may be found in every large sect, and who are peculiarly likely to be found in a persecuted sect. Some of the violent Cameronians had recently, under similar exasperation, committed similar crimes.

It was natural that there should be a panic; and it was natural that the people should, in a panic, be unreasonable and credulous. It must be remembered also that they had not at first, as we have, the means of comparing the evidence which was given on different trials. They were not aware of one tenth part of the contradictions and absurdities which Oates had committed. The blunders, for example, into which he fell before the Council, his mistake about the person of Don John of Austria, and about the situation of the Jesuits' College at Paris, were not publicly known. He was a bad man; but the spies and deserters by whom governments are informed of conspiracies are generally bad men. His story was strange and romantic; but it was not more strange or romantic than a well-authenticated Popish plot, which some few people then living might remember, the Gunpowder treason. Oates's account of the burning of London was in itself not more im-

Digitized by Google

probable than the project of blowing up King, Lords, and Commons, a project which had not only been entertained by very distinguished Catholics, but which had very narrowly missed of success. As to the design on the King's person, all the world knew that, within a century, two kings of France and a prince of Orange had been murdered by Catholics, purely from religious enthusiasm, that Elizabeth had been in constant danger of a similar fate, and that such attempts, to say the least, had not been discouraged by the highest authority of the Church of Rome. The characters of some of the accused persons stood high; but so did that of Anthony Babington, and that of Everard Digby. Those who suffered denied their guilt to the last; but no persons versed in criminal proceedings would attach any importance to this circumstance. It was well known also that the most distinguished Catholic casuists had written largely in defence of regicide, of mental reservation and of equivocation. It was not quite impossible that men whose minds had been nourished with the writings of such casuists might think themselves justified in denying a charge which, if acknowledged, would bring great scandal on the Church. The trials of the accused Catholics were exactly like all the state trials of those days; that is to say, as infamous as they could be. They were neither fairer nor less fair than those of Algernon Sydney, of Rosewell, of Cornish, of all the unhappy men, in short, whom a predominant party brought to what was then facetiously called justice. Till the Revolution purified our institutions and our manners, a state-trial was merely a murder preceded by the uttering of certain gibberish and the performance of certain mummeries.

The Opposition had now the great body of the

Digitized by Google

nation with them. Thrice the King dissolved the Parliament; and thrice the constituent body sent him back representatives fully determined to keep strict watch on all his measures, and to exclude his brother from the throne. Had the character of Charles resembled that of his father, this intestine discord would infallibly have ended in a civil war. Obstinacy and passion would have been his ruin. His levity and apathy were his security. He resembled one of those light Indian boats which are safe because they are pliant, which yield to the impact of every wave, and which therefore bound without danger through a surf in which a vessel ribbed with heart of oak would inevitably perish. The only thing about which his mind was unalterably made up was that, to use his own phrase, he would not go on his travels again for any body or for any thing. His easy, indolent behaviour produced all the effects of the most artful policy. He suffered things to take their course; and if Achitophel had been at one of his ears, and Machiavel at the other, they could have given him no better advice than to let things take their course. He gave way to the violence of the movement, and waited for the corresponding violence of the rebound. He exhibited himself to his subjects in the interesting character of an oppressed king, who was ready to do any thing to please them, and who asked of them in return, only some consideration for his conscientious scruples and for his feelings of natural affection, who was ready to accept any ministers, to grant any guarantees to public liberty, but who could not find it in his heart to take away his brother's birthright. Nothing more was necessary. He had to deal with a people whose noble weakness it has always been not to press too hardly on

Digitized by Google

the vanquished, with a people the lowest and most brutal of whom cry "Shame!" if they see a man struck when he is on the ground. The resentment which the nation had felt towards the Court began to abate as soon as the Court was manifestly unable to offer any resistance. The panic which Godfrey's death had excited gradually subsided. Every day brought to light some new falsehood or contradiction in the stories of Oates and Bedloe. The people were glutted with the blood of Papists, as they had, twenty years before, been glutted with the blood of regicides. When the first sufferers in the plot were brought to the bar, the witnesses for the defence were in danger of being torn in pieces by the mob. Judges, jurors, and spectators seemed equally indifferent to justice, and equally eager for revenge. Lord Stafford, the last sufferer, was pronounced not guilty by a large minority of his peers; and when he protested his innocence on the scaffold, the people cried out, "God bless you, my lord; we believe you, my lord." The attempt to make a son of Lucy Waters King of England was alike offensive to the pride of the nobles and to the moral feeling of the middle class. The old Cavalier party, the great majority of the landed gentry, the clergy and the universities almost to a man, began to draw together, and to form in close array round the throne.

A similar reaction had begun to take place in favour of Charles the First during the second session of the Long Parliament; and, if that prince had been honest or sagacious enough to keep himself strictly within the limits of the law, we have not the smallest doubt that he would in a few months have found himself at least as powerful as his best friends, Lord Falkland, Cul-

Digitized by Google

peper, or Hyde, would have wished to see him. By illegally impeaching the leaders of the Opposition, and by making in person a wicked attempt on the House of Commons, he stopped and turned back that tide of loyal feeling which was just beginning to run strongly. The son, quite as little restrained by law or by honour as the father, was, luckily for himself, a man of a lounging, careless temper, and, from temper, we believe, rather than from policy, escaped that great error which cost the father so dear. Instead of trying to pluck the fruit before it was ripe, he lay still till it fell mellow into his very mouth. If he had arrested Lord Shaftesbury and Lord Russell in a manner not warranted by law, it is not improbable that he would have ended his life in exile. He took the sure course. He employed only his legal prerogatives, and he found them amply sufficient for his purpose.

During the first eighteen or nineteen years of his reign, he had been playing the game of his enemies. From 1678 to 1681, his enemies had played his game. They owed their power to his misgovernment. He owed the recovery of his power to their violence. The great body of the people came back to him after their estrangement with impetuous affection. He had scarcely been more popular when he landed on the coast of Kent than when, after several years of restraint and humiliation, he dissolved his last Parliament.

Nevertheless, while this flux and reflux of opinion went on, the cause of public liberty was steadily gaining. There had been a great reaction in favour of the throne at the Restoration. But the Star-Chamber, the High Commission, the Ship-money, had forever disappeared. There was now another similar reaction. But the Habeas-Corpus Act had been passed during

Digitized by Google

the short predominance of the Opposition, and it was not repealed.

The King, however, supported as he was by the nation, was quite strong enough to inflict a terrible revenge on the party which had lately held him in bondage. In 1681 commenced the third of those periods into which we have divided the history of England from the Restoration to the Revolution. During this period a third great reaction took place. The excesses of tyranny restored to the cause of liberty the hearts which had been alienated from that cause by the excesses of faction. In 1681, the King had almost his enemies at his feet. In 1688, the King was an exile in a strange land.

The whole of that machinery which had lately been in motion against the Papists was now put in motion against the Whigs, browbeating judges, packed juries, lying witnesses, clamorous spectators. The ablest chief of the party fled to a foreign country and died there. The most virtuous man of the party was beheaded. Another of its most distinguished members preferred a voluntary death to the shame of a public execution. The boroughs on which the government could not depend were, by means of legal quibbles, deprived of their charters; and their constitution was remodelled in such a manner as almost to insure the return of representatives devoted to the Court. All parts of the kingdom emulously sent up the most extravagant assurances of the love which they bore to their sovereign, and of the abhorrence with which they regarded those who questioned the divine origin or the boundless extent of his power. It is scarcely necessary to say that, in this hot competition of bigots and slaves, the University of Oxford had the unquestioned preemi-

Digitized by Google

nence. The glory of being farther behind the age than any other portion of the British people, is one which that learned body acquired early, and has never lost.

Charles died, and his brother came to the throne; but, though the person of the sovereign was changed, the love and awe with which the office was regarded were undiminished. Indeed, it seems that, of the two princes, James was, in spite of his religion, rather the favourite of the High Church party. He had been specially singled out as the mark of the Whigs; and this circumstance sufficed to make him the idol of the Tories. He called a parliament. The loyal gentry of the counties and the packed voters of the remodelled boroughs gave him a parliament such as England had not seen for a century, a parliament beyond all comparison the most obsequious that ever sat under a prince of the House of Stuart. One insurrectionary movement, indeed, took place in England and another in Scotland. Both were put down with ease, and punished with tremendous severity. Even after that bloody circuit, which will never be forgotten while the English race exists in any part of the globe, no member of the House of Commons ventured to whisper even the mildest censure on Jeffreys. Edmund Waller, emboldened by his great age and his high reputation, attacked the cruelty of the military chiefs; and this is the brightest part of his long and checkered public life. But even Waller did not venture to arraign the still more odious cruelty of the Chief Justice. It is hardly too much to say that James, at that time, had little reason to envy the extent of authority possessed by Lewis the Fourteenth.

By what means this vast power was in three years

Digitized by Google

broken down, by what perverse and frantic misgovernment the tyrant revived the spirit of the vanquished Whigs, turned to fixed hostility the neutrality of the trimmers, and drove from him the landed gentry, the Church, the army, his own creatures, his own children, is well known to our readers. But we wish to say something about one part of the question, which in our own time has a little puzzled some very worthy men, and about which the author of the Continuation before us has said much with which we can by no means concur.

James, it is said, declared himself a supporter of toleration. If he violated the constitution, he at least violated it for one of the noblest ends that any statesman ever had in view. His object was to free millions of his subjects from penal laws and disabilities which hardly any person now considers as just. He ought, therefore, to be regarded as blameless, or, at worst, as guilty only of employing irregular means to effect a most praiseworthy purpose. A very ingenious man, whom we believe to be a Catholic, Mr. Banim, has written a historical novel, of the literary merit of which we cannot speak very highly, for the purpose of inculcating this opinion. The editor of Mackintosh's Fragment assures us, that the standard of James bore the nobler inscription, and so forth; the meaning of which is, that William and the other authors of the Revolution were vile Whigs who drove out James for being a Radical; that the crime of the King was his going farther in liberality than his subjects; that he was the real champion of freedom; and that Somers, Locke, Newton, and other narrow-minded people of the same sort, were the real bigots and oppressors.

Now, we admit that if the premises can be made out,

Digitized by Google

the conclusion follows. If it can be shown that James did sincerely wish to establish perfect freedom of conscience, we shall think his conduct deserving of indulgence, if not of praise. We shall not be inclined to censure harshly even his illegal acts. We conceive that so noble and salutary an object would have justified resistance on the part of subjects. We can therefore scarcely deny that it would at least excuse encroachment on the part of a king. But it can be proved, we think, by the strongest evidence, that James had no such object in view; and that, under the pretence of establishing perfect religious liberty, he was trying to establish the ascendency and the exclusive dominion of the Church of Rome.

It is true that he professed himself a supporter of toleration. Every sect clamours for toleration when it is down. We have not the smallest doubt that, when Bonner was in the Marshalsea, he thought it a very hard thing that a man should be locked up in a gaol for not being able to understand the words, "This is my body," in the same way with the lords of the council. It would not be very wise to conclude that a beggar is full of Christian charity, because he assures you that God will reward you if you give him a penny; or that a soldier is humane, because he cries out lustily for quarter when a bayonet is at his throat. The doctrine which, from the very first origin of religious dissensions, has been held by all bigots of all sects, when condensed into a few words, and stripped of rhetorical disguise, is simply this: I am in the right, and you are in the wrong. When you are the stronger you ought to tolerate me; for it is your duty to tolerate truth. But when I am the stronger, I shall persecute you; for it is my duty to persecute error.

Digitized by Google

The Catholics lay under severe restraints in England. James wished to remove those restraints; and therefore he held a language favourable to liberty of conscience. But the whole history of his life proves that this was a mere pretence. In 1679 he held similar language, in a conversation with the magistrates of Amsterdam; and the author of the Continuation refers to this circumstance as a proof that the King had long entertained a strong feeling on the subject. Unhappily it proves only the utter insincerity of all the King's later professions. If he had pretended to be converted to the doctrines of toleration after his accession to the throne, some credit might have been due to him. But we know most certainly that, in 1679, and long after that year, James was a most bloody and remorseless persecutor. After 1679, he was placed at the head of the government of Scotland. And what had been his conduct in that country? He had hunted down the scattered remnant of the Covenanters with a barbarity of which no other prince of modern times, Philip the Second excepted, had ever shown himself capable. He had indulged himself in the amusement of seeing the torture of the Boot inflicted on the wretched enthusiasts whom persecution had driven to resistance. After his accession, almost his first act was to obtain from the servile parliament of Scotland a law for inflicting death on preachers at conventicles held within houses, and on both preachers and hearers at conventicles held in the open air. All this he had done for a religion which was not his own. All this he had done, not in defence of truth against error, but in defence of one damnable error against another, in defence of the Episcopalian against the Presbyterian apostasy. Lewis the Fourteenth is justly censured for

Digitized by Google

trying to dragoon his subjects to heaven. But it was reserved for James to torture and murder for the difference between two roads to hell. And this man, so deeply imbued with the poison of intolerance that, rather than not persecute at all, he would persecute people out of one heresy into another, this man is held up as the champion of religious liberty. This man, who persecuted in the cause of the unclean panther, would not, we are told, have persecuted for the sake of the milk-white and immortal hind.

And what was the conduct of James at the very time when he was professing zeal for the rights of conscience? Was he not even then persecuting to the very best of his power? Was he not employing all his legal prerogatives, and many prerogatives which were not legal, for the purpose of forcing his subjects to conform to his creed? While he pretended to abhor the laws which excluded Dissenters from office, was he not himself dismissing from office his ablest, his most experienced, his most faithful servants, on account of their religious opinions? For what offence was Lord Rochester driven from the Treasury? He was closely connected with the Royal House. He was at the head of the Tory party. He had stood firmly by James in the most trying emergencies. But he would not change his religion, and he was dismissed. That we may not be suspected of overstating the case, Dr. Lingard, a very competent, and assuredly not a very willing witness, shall speak for us. "The King," says that able but partial writer, "was disappointed: he complained to Barillon of the obstinacy and insincerity of the treasurer; and the latter received from the French envoy a very intelligible hint that the loss of office would result from his adhesion to his religious

Digitized by Google

creed. He was, however, inflexible; and James, after a long delay, communicated to him, but with considerable embarrassment and many tears, his final determination. He had hoped, he said, that Rochester, by conforming to the Church of Rome, would have spared him the unpleasant task; but kings must sacrifice their feelings to their duty." And this was the King who wished to have all men of all sects rendered alike capable of holding office. These proceedings were alone sufficient to take away all credit from his liberal professions; and such, as we learn from the despatches of the Papal Nuncio, was really the effect. "Pare," says D'Adda, writing a few days after the retirement of Rochester, "pare che gli animi sono inaspriti della voce che corre trà il popolo, d' esser cacciato il detto ministro per non essere Cattolico, perciò tirarsi al esterminio de' Protestanti." Was it ever denied that the favours of the Crown were constantly bestowed and withheld purely on account of the religious opinions of the claimants? And if these things were done in the green tree, what would have been done in the dry? If James acted thus when he had the strongest motives to court his Protestant subjects, what course was he likely to follow when he had obtained from them all that he asked?

Who again was his closest ally? And what was the policy of that ally? The subjects of James, it is true, did not know half the infamy of their sovereign. They did not know, as we know, that, while he was lecturing them on the blessings of equal toleration, he was constantly congratulating his good brother Lewis on the success of that intolerant policy which had turned the fairest tracts of France into deserts, and driven into exile myriads of the most peaceable, industrious, and skilful artisans in the world. But

Digitized by Google

the English did know that the two princes were bound together in the closest union. They saw their sovereign with toleration on his lips, separating himself from those states which had first set the example of toleration, and connecting himself by the strongest ties with the most faithless and merciless persecutor who could then be found on any continental throne.

By what advice again was James guided? Who were the persons in whom he placed the greatest confidence, and who took the warmest interest in his schemes? The ambassador of France, the Nuncio of Rome, and Father Petre the Jesuit. And is not this enough to prove that the establishment of equal toleration was not his plan? Was Lewis for toleration? Was the Vatican for toleration? Was the order of Jesuits for toleration? We know that the liberal professions of James were highly approved by those very governments, by those very societies, whose theory and practice it notoriously was to keep no faith with heretics and to give no quarter to heretics. And are we, in order to save James's reputation for sincerity, to believe that all at once those governments and those societies had changed their nature, had discovered the criminality of all their former conduct, had adopted principles far more liberal than those of Locke, of Leighton, or of Tillotson? Which is the more probable supposition, that the King who had revoked the edict of Nantes, the Pope under whose sanction the Inquisition was then imprisoning and burning, the religious order which, in every controversy in which it had ever been engaged, had called in the aid either of the magistrate or of the assassin, should have become as thorough-going friends to religious liberty as Dr. Franklin and Mr. Jefferson, or that

Digitized by Google

a Jesuit-ridden bigot should be induced to dissemble for the good of the Church?

The game which the Jesuits were playing was no new game. A hundred years before they had preached up political freedom, just as they were now preaching up religious freedom. They had tried to raise the republicans against Henry the Fourth and Elizabeth, just as they were now trying to raise the Protestant Dissenters against the Established Church. In the sixteenth century, the tools of Philip the Second were constantly preaching doctrines that bordered on Jacobinism, constantly insisting on the right of the people to cashier kings, and of every private citizen to plunge his dagger into the heart of a wicked ruler. In the seventeenth century, the persecutors of the Huguenots were crying out against the tyranny of the Established Church of England, and vindicating with the utmost fervour the right of every man to adore God after his own fashion. In both cases they were alike insincere. In both cases the fool who had trusted them would have found himself miserably duped. A good and wise man would doubtless disapprove of the arbitrary measures of Elizabeth. But would he have really served the interests of political liberty, if he had put faith in the professions of the Romish casuists, joined their party, and taken a share in Northumberland's revolt, or in Babington's conspiracy? Would he not have been assisting to establish a far worse tyranny than that which he was trying to put down? In the same manner, a good and wise man would doubtless see very much to condemn in the conduct of the Church of England under the Stuarts. But was he therefore to join the King and the Catholics against that Church?

Digitized by Google

And was it not plain that, by so doing, he would assist in setting up a spiritual despotism, compared with which the despotism of the Establishment was as a little finger to the loins, as a rod of whips to a rod of scorpions?

Lewis had a far stronger mind than James. He had at least an equally high sense of honour. He was in a much less degree the slave of his priests. His Protestant subjects had all the security for their rights of conscience which law and solemn compact could give. Had that security been found sufficient? And was not one such instance enough for one generation?

The plan of James seems to us perfectly intelligible. The toleration which, with the concurrence and applause of all the most cruel persecutors in Europe, he was offering to his people, was meant simply to divide them. This is the most obvious and vulgar of political artifices. We have seen it employed a hundred times within our own memory. At this moment we see the Carlists in France hallooing on the Extreme Left against the Centre Left. Four years ago the same trick was practised in England. We heard old buyers and sellers of boroughs, men who had been seated in the House of Commons by the unsparing use of ejectments, and who had, through their whole lives, opposed every measure which tended to increase the power of the democracy, abusing the Reform Bill as not democratic enough, appealing to the labouring classes, execrating the tyranny of the ten-pound householders, and exchanging compliments and caresses with the most noted incendiaries of our time. The cry of universal toleration was employed by James, just as the cry of universal suffrage was lately employed by some veteran Tories. The object of the mock democrats of our

Digitized by Google

time was to produce a conflict between the middle classes and the multitude, and thus to prevent all reform. The object of James was to produce a conflict between the Church and the Protestant Dissenters, and thus to facilitate the victory of the Catholics over both.

We do not believe that he could have succeeded. But we do not think his plan so utterly frantic and hopeless as it has generally been thought; and we are sure that, if he had been allowed to gain his first point, the people would have had no remedy left but an appeal to physical force, which would have been made under most unfavourable circumstances. He conceived that the Tories, hampered by their professions of passive obedience, would have submitted to his pleasure, and that the Dissenters, seduced by his delusive promises of relief, would have given him strenuous support. In this way he hoped to obtain a law, nominally for the removal of all religious disabilities, but really for the excluding of all Protestants from all offices. It is never to be forgotten that a prince who has all the patronage of the state in his hands can, without violating the letter of the law, establish whatever test he chooses. And, from the whole conduct of James, we have not the smallest doubt that he would have availed himself of his power to the utmost. The statute-book might declare all Englishmen equally capable of holding office; but to what end, if all offices were in the gift of a sovereign resolved not to employ a single heretic? We firmly believe that not one post in the government, in the army, in the navy, on the bench, or at the bar, not one peerage, nay not one ecclesiastical benefice in the royal gift, would have been bestowed on any Protes-

Digitized by Google

tant of any persuasion. Even while the King had still strong motives to dissemble, he had made a Catholic Dean of Christ Church and a Catholic President of Magdalen College. There seems to be no doubt that the See of York was kept vacant for another Catholic. If James had been suffered to follow this course for twenty years, every military man from a general to a drummer, every officer of a ship, every judge, every King's counsel, every lord-lieutenant of a county, every justice of the peace, every ambassador, every minister of state, every person employed in the royal household, in the custom-house, in the post-office, in the excise, would have been a Catholic. The Catholics would have had a majority in the House of Lords, even if that majority had been made, as Sunderland threatened, by bestowing coronets on a whole troop of the Guards. Catholics would have had, we believe, the chief weight even in the Convocation. Every bishop, every dean, every holder of a crown living, every head of every college which was subject to the royal power, would have belonged to the Church of Rome. Almost all the places of liberal education would have been under the direction of Catholics. The whole power of licensing books would have been in the hands of Catholics. All this immense mass of power would have been steadily supported by the arms and by the gold of France, and would have descended to an heir whose whole education would have been conducted with a view to one single end, the complete reestablishment of the Catholic religion. The House of Commons would have been the only legal obstacle. But the rights of a great portion of the electors were at the mercy of the courts of law; and the courts of law were ab-

Digitized by Google

solutely dependent on the Crown. We cannot therefore think it altogether impossible that a house might have been packed which would have restored the days of Mary.

We certainly do not believe that this would have been tamely borne. But we do believe that, if the nation had been deluded by the King's professions of toleration, all this would have been attempted, and could have been averted only by a most bloody and destructive contest, in which the whole Protestant population would have been opposed to the Catholics. On the one side would have been a vast numerical superiority. But on the other side would have been the whole organization of government, and two great disciplined armies, that of James, and that of Lewis. We do not doubt that the nation would have achieved its deliverance. But we believe that the struggle would have shaken the whole fabric of society, and that the vengeance of the conquerors would have been terrible and unsparing.

But James was stopped at the outset. He thought himself secure of the Tories, because they professed to consider all resistance as sinful, and of the Protestant Dissenters, because he offered them relief. He was in the wrong as to both. The error into which he fell about the Dissenters was very natural. But the confidence which he placed in the loyal assurances of the High Church party, was the most exquisitely ludicrous proof of folly that a politician ever gave.

Only imagine a man acting for one single day on the supposition that all his neighbours believe all that they profess, and act up to all that they believe. Imagine a man acting on the supposition that he may safely offer the deadliest injuries and insults to everybody who

Digitized by Google

says that revenge is sinful; or that he may safely intrust all his property without security to any person who says that it is wrong to steal. Such a character would be too absurd for the wildest farce. Yet the folly of James did not stop short of this incredible extent. Because the clergy had declared that resistance to oppression was in no case lawful, he conceived that he might oppress them exactly as much as he chose, without the smallest danger of resistance. He quite forgot that, when they magnified the royal prerogative, the prerogative was exerted on their side, that, when they preached endurance, they had nothing to endure, that, when they declared it unlawful to resist evil, none but Whigs and Dissenters suffered any evil. It had never occurred to him that a man feels the calamities of his enemies with one sort of sensibility, and his own with quite a different sort. It had never occurred to him as possible that a reverend divine might think it the duty of Baxter and Bunyan to bear insults and to lie in dungeons without murmuring, and yet, when he saw the smallest chance that his own prebend might be transferred to some sly Father from Italy or Flanders, might begin to discover much matter for useful meditation in the texts touching Ehud's knife and Jael's hammer. His majesty was not aware, it should seem, that people do sometimes reconsider their opinions; and that nothing more disposes a man to reconsider his opinions than a suspicion, that, if he adheres to them, he is very likely to be a beggar or a martyr. Yet it seems strange that these truths should have escaped the royal mind. Those Churchmen who had signed the Oxford Declaration in favour of passive obedience had also signed the thirty-nine Articles. And yet the very man who confidently expected that, by a little coaxing and bullying,

Digitized by Google

he should induce them to renounce the Articles, was thunderstruck when he found that they were disposed to soften down the doctrines of the Declaration. Nor did it necessarily follow that, even if the theory of the Tories had undergone no modification, their practice would coincide with their theory. It might, one should think, have crossed the mind of a man of fifty, who had seen a great deal of the world, that people sometimes do what they think wrong. Though a prelate might hold that Paul directs us to obey even a Nero, it might not on that account be perfectly safe to treat the Right Reverend Father in God after the fashion of Nero, in the hope that he would continue to obey on the principles of Paul. The King indeed had only to look at home. He was at least as much attached to the Catholic Church as any Tory gentleman or clergyman could be to the Church of England. Adultery was at least as clearly and strongly condemned by his Church as resistance by the Church of England. Yet his priests could not keep him from Arabella Sedley. While he was risking his crown for the sake of his soul, he was risking his soul for the sake of an ugly, dirty mistress. There is something delightfully grotesque in the spectacle of a man who, while living in the habitual violation of his own known duties, is unable to believe that any temptation can draw any other person aside from the path of virtue.

James was disappointed in all his calculations. His hope was that the Tories would follow their principles, and that the Non-conformists would follow their interests. Exactly the reverse took place. The great body of the Tories sacrificed the principle of non-resistance to their interests; the great body of Non-conformists rejected the delusive offers of the King, and stood

Digitized by Google

firmly by their principles. The two parties whose strife had convulsed the empire during half a century were united for a moment; and all the vast royal power which three years before had seemed immovably fixed vanished at once like chaff in a hurricane.

The very great length to which this article has already been extended makes it impossible for us to discuss, as we had meant to do, the characters and conduct of the leading English statesmen at this crisis. But we must offer a few remarks on the spirit and tendency of the Revolution of 1688.

The editor of this volume quotes the Declaration of Right, and tells us that, by looking at it, we may "judge at a glance whether the authors of the Revolution achieved all they might and ought, in their position, to have achieved; whether the Commons of England did their duty to their constituents, their country, posterity, and universal freedom." We are at a loss to imagine how he can have read and transcribed the Declaration of Right, and yet have so utterly misconceived its nature. That famous document is, as its very name imports, declaratory, and not remedial. It was never meant to be a measure of reform. It neither contained, nor was designed to contain, any allusion to those innovations which the authors of the Revolution considered as desirable, and which they speedily proceeded to make. The Declaration was merely a recital of certain old and wholesome laws which had been violated by the Stuarts, and a solemn protest against the validity of any precedent which might be set up in opposition to those laws. The words run thus: "They do claim, demand, and insist upon all and singular the premises as their undoubted rights and liberties." Before a man begins to make improvements on his estate,

Digitized by Google

he must know its boundaries. Before a legislature sits down to reform a constitution, it is fit to ascertain what that constitution really is. This is all that the Declaration was intended to do; and to quarrel with it because it did not directly introduce any beneficial changes is to quarrel with meat for not being fuel.

The principle on which the authors of the Revolution acted cannot be mistaken. They were perfectly aware that the English institutions stood in need of reform. But they also knew that an important point was gained if they could settle once for all, by a solemn compact, the matters which had, during several generations, been in controversy between the Parliament and the Crown. They therefore most judiciously abstained from mixing up the irritating and perplexing question of what ought to be the law with the plain question of what was the law. As to the claims set forth in the Declaration of Right, there was little room for debate. Whigs and Tories were generally agreed as to the illegality of the dispensing power and of taxation imposed by the royal prerogative. The articles were therefore adjusted in a very few days. But if the Parliament had determined to revise the whole constitution, and to provide new securities against misgovernment, before proclaiming the new sovereigns, months would have been lost in disputes. The coalition which had delivered the country would have been instantly dissolved. The Whigs would have quarrelled with the Tories, the Lords with the Commons, the Church with the Dissenters; and all this storm of conflicting interests and conflicting theories would have been raging round a vacant throne. In the mean time, the greatest power on the Continent was attacking our allies, and meditating a descent on our own territories. Dundee was preparing

Digitized by Google

to raise the Highlands. The authority of James was still owned by the Irish. If the authors of the Revolution had been fools enough to take this course, we have little doubt that Luxembourg would have been upon them in the midst of their constitution-making. They might probably have been interrupted in a debate on Filmer's and Sydney's theories of government by the entrance of the musqueteers of Lewis's household, and have been marched off, two and two, to frame imaginary monarchies and commonwealths in the Tower. We have had in our own time abundant experience of the effects of such folly. We have seen nation after nation enslaved, because the friends of liberty wasted in discussions upon abstract questions the time which ought to have been employed in preparing for vigorous national defence. This editor, apparently, would have had the English Revolution of 1688 end as the Revolutions of Spain and Naples ended in our days. Thank God, our deliverers were men of a very different order from the Spanish and Neapolitan legislators. They might, on many subjects, hold opinions which, in the nineteenth century, would not be considered as liberal. But they were not dreaming pedants. They were statesmen accustomed to the management of great affairs. Their plans of reform were not so extensive as those of the lawgivers of Cadiz; but what they planned, that they effected; and what they effected, that they maintained against the fiercest hostility at home and abroad.

Their first object was to seat William on the throne; and they were right. We say this without any reference to the eminent personal qualities of William, or to the follies and crimes of James. If the two princes had interchanged characters, our opinion would still

Digitized by Google

have been the same. It was even more necessary to England at that time that her king should be a usurper than that he should be a hero. There could be no security for good government without a change of dynasty. The reverence for hereditary right and the doctrine of passive obedience had taken such a hold on the minds of the Tories, that, if James had been restored to power on any conditions, their attachment to him would in all probability have revived, as the indignation which recent oppression had produced faded from their minds. It had become indispensable to have a sovereign whose title to his throne was strictly bound up with the title of the nation to its liberties. In the compact between the Prince of Orange and the Convention, there was one most important article which, though not expressed, was perfectly understood by both parties, and for the performance of which the country had securities far better than all the engagements that Charles the First or Ferdinand the Seventh ever took in the day of their weakness, and broke in the day of their power. The article to which we allude was this, that William would in all things conform himself to what should appear to be the fixed and deliberate sense of his Parliament. The security for the performance was this, that he had no claim to the throne except the choice of Parliament, and no means of maintaining himself on the throne but the support of Parliament. All the great and inestimable reforms which speedily followed the Revolution were implied in those simple words; "The Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, assembled at Westminster, do resolve that William and Mary, Prince and Princess of Orange, be, and be declared King and Queen of England."

And what were the reforms of which we speak? We

Digitized by Google

will shortly recount some which we think the most important; and we will then leave our readers to judge whether those who consider the Revolution as a mere change of dynasty, beneficial to a few aristocrats, but useless to the body of the people, or those who consider it as a happy era in the history of the British nation and of the human species, have judged more correctly of its nature.

Foremost in the list of the benefits which our country owes to the Revolution we place the Toleration Act. It is true that this measure fell short of the wishes of the leading Whigs. It is true also that, where Catholics were concerned, even the most enlightened of the leading Whigs held opinions by no means so liberal as those which are happily common at the present day. Those distinguished statesmen did however make a noble, and, in some respects, a successful struggle for the rights of conscience. Their wish was to bring the great body of the Protestant Dissenters within the pale of the Church by judicious alterations in the Liturgy and the Articles, and to grant to those who still remained without that pale the most ample toleration. They framed a plan of comprehension which would have satisfied a great majority of the seceders; and they proposed the complete abolition of that absurd and odious test which, after having been, during a century and a half, a scandal to the pious and a laughing-stock to the profane, was at length removed in our own time. The immense power of the Clergy and of the Tory gentry frustrated these excellent designs. The Whigs, however, did much. They succeeded in obtaining a law in the provisions of which a philosopher will doubtless find much to condemn, but which had the practical effect of enabling almost every Protestant Nonconform-

Digitized by Google

ist to follow the dictates of his own conscience without molestation. Scarcely a law in the statute-book is theoretically more objectionable than the Toleration Act. But we question whether in the whole of that vast mass of legislation, from the Great Charter downwards, there be a single law which has so much diminished the sum of human suffering, which has done so much to allay bad passions, which has put an end to so much petty tyranny and vexation, which has brought gladness, peace, and a sense of security to so many private dwellings.

The second of those great reforms which the Revolution produced was the final establishment of the Presbyterian Kirk in Scotland. We shall not now inquire whether the Episcopal or the Calvinistic form of Church government be more agreeable to primitive practice. Far be it from us to disturb with our doubts the repose of any Oxonian Bachelor of Divinity who conceives that the English prelates with their baronies and palaces, their purple and their fine linen, their mitred carriages and their sumptuous tables, are the true successors of those ancient bishops who lived by catching fish and mending tents. We say only that the Scotch, doubtless from their own inveterate stupidity and malice, were not Episcopalians; that they could not be made Episcopalians; that the whole power of government had been in vain employed for the purpose of converting them; that the fullest instruction on the mysterious questions of the Apostolical succession and the imposition of hands had been imparted by the very logical process of putting the legs of the students into wooden boots, and driving two or more wedges between their knees; that a course of divinity lectures, of the most edifying kind, had been given in

Digitized by Google

the grass-market of Edinburgh; yet that, in spite of all the exertions of those great theological professors, Lauderdale and Dundee, the Covenanters were as obstinate as ever. To the contest between the Scotch nation and the Anglican Church are to be ascribed near thirty years of the most frightful misgovernment ever seen in any part of Great Britain. If the Revolution had produced no other effect than that of freeing the Scotch from the yoke of an establishment which they detested, and giving them one to which they were attached, it would have been one of the happiest events in our history.

The third great benefit which the country derived from the Revolution was the alteration in the mode of granting the supplies. It had been the practice to settle on every prince, at the commencement of his reign, the produce of certain taxes which, it was supposed, would yield a sum sufficient to defray the ordinary expenses of government. The distribution of the revenue was left wholly to the sovereign. He might be forced by a war, or by his own profusion, to ask for an extraordinary grant. But, if his policy were economical and pacific, he might reign many years without once being under the necessity of summoning his Parliament, or of taking their advice when he had summoned them. This was not all. The natural tendency of every society in which property enjoys tolerable security is to increase in wealth. With the national wealth, the produce of the customs, of the excise, and of the post-office, would of course increase; and thus it might well happen that taxes which, at the beginning of a long reign, were barely sufficient to support a frugal government in time of peace, might, before the end of that reign, enable the

Digitized by Google

sovereign to imitate the extravagance of Nero or Heliogabalus, to raise great armies, to carry on expensive wars. Something of this sort had actually happened under Charles the Second, though his reign, reckoned from the Restoration, lasted only twenty-five years. His first Parliament settled on him taxes estimated to produce twelve hundred thousand pounds a year. This they thought sufficient, as they allowed nothing for a standing army in time of peace. At the time of Charles's death, the annual produce of these taxes considerably exceeded a million and a half; and the King who, during the years which immediately followed his accession, was perpetually in distress, and perpetually asking his Parliaments for money, was at last able to keep a body of regular troops without any assistance from the House of Commons. If his reign had been as long as that of George the Third, he would probably, before the close of it, have been in the annual receipt of several millions over and above what the ordinary expenses of civil government required; and of those millions he would have been as absolutely master as the King now is of the sum allotted for his privy-purse. He might have spent them in luxury, in corruption, in paying troops to overawe his people, or in carrying into effect wild schemes of foreign conquest. The authors of the Revolution applied a remedy to this great abuse. They settled on the King, not the fluctuating produce of certain fixed taxes, but a fixed sum sufficient for the support of his own royal state. They established it as a rule that all the expenses of the army, the navy, and the ordnance, should be brought annually under the review of the House of Commons, and that every sum voted should be applied to the service specified in the vote. The direct effect of this

Digitized by Google

change was important. The indirect effect has been more important still. From that time the House of Commons has been really the paramount power in the state. It has, in truth, appointed and removed ministers, declared war, and concluded peace. No combination of the King and the Lords has ever been able to effect any thing against the Lower House, backed by its constituents. Three or four times, indeed, the sovereign has been able to break the force of an opposition by dissolving the Parliament. But if that experiment should fail, if the people should be of the same mind with their representatives, he would clearly have no course left but to yield, to abdicate, or to fight.

The next great blessing which we owe to the Revolution is the purification of the administration of justice in political cases. Of the importance of this change no person can judge who is not well acquainted with the earlier volumes of the State Trials. These volumes are, we do not hesitate to say, the most frightful record of baseness and depravity that is extant in the world. Our hatred is altogether turned away from the crimes and the criminals, and directed against the law and its ministers. We see villanies as black as ever were imputed to any prisoner at any bar daily committed on the bench and in the jury-box. The worst of the bad acts which brought discredit on the old Parliaments of France, the condemnation of Lally, for example, or even that of Calas, may seem praiseworthy when compared with the atrocities which follow each other in endless succession as we turn over that huge chronicle of the shame of England. The magistrates of Paris and Toulouse were blinded by prejudice, passion, or bigotry. But the abandoned judges of our own country committed murder with their eyes open.

Digitized by Google

The cause of this is plain. In France there was no constitutional opposition. If a man held language offensive to the government, he was at once sent to the Bastile or to Vincennes. But in England, at least after the days of the Long Parliament, the King could not, by a mere act of his prerogative, rid himself of a troublesome politician. He was forced to remove those who thwarted him by means of perjured witnesses, packed juries, and corrupt, hard-hearted, brow-beating judges. The Opposition naturally retaliated whenever they had the upper hand. Every time that the power passed from one party to the other, there was a proscription and a massacre, thinly disguised under the forms of judicial procedure. The tribunals ought to be sacred places of refuge, where, in all the vicissitudes of public affairs, the innocent of all parties may find shelter. They were, before the Revolution, an unclean public shambles, to which each party in its turn dragged its opponents, and where each found the same venal and ferocious butchers waiting for its custom. Papist or Protestant, Tory or Whig, Priest or Alderman, all was one to those greedy and savage natures, provided only there was money to earn, and blood to shed.

Of course, these worthless judges soon created around them, as was natural, a breed of informers more wicked, if possible, than themselves. The trial by jury afforded little or no protection to the innocent. The juries were nominated by the sheriffs. The sheriffs were in most parts of England nominated by the Crown. In London, the great scene of political contention, those officers were chosen by the people. The fiercest parliamentary election of our time will give but a faint notion of the storm which raged in the city on

Digitized by Google

the day when two infuriated parties, each bearing its badge, met to select the men in whose hands were to be the issues of life and death for the coming year. On that day, nobles of the highest descent did not think it beneath them to canvass and marshal the livery, to head the procession, and to watch the poll. On that day, the great chiefs of parties waited in an agony of suspense for the messenger who was to bring from Guildhall the news whether their lives and estates were, for the next twelve months, to be at the mercy of a friend or of a foe. In 1681, Whig sheriffs were chosen; and Shaftesbury defied the whole power of the government. In 1682 the sheriffs were Tories. Shaftesbury fled to Holland. The other chiefs of the party broke up their councils, and retired in haste to their country-seats. Sydney on the scaffold told those sheriffs that his blood was on their heads. Neither of them could deny the charge; and one of them wept with shame and remorse.

Thus every man who then meddled with public affairs, took his life in his hand. The consequence was that men of gentle natures stood aloof from contests in which they could not engage without hazarding their own necks and the fortunes of their children. This was the course adopted by Sir William Temple, by Evelyn, and by many other men who were, in every respect, admirably qualified to serve the State. On the other hand, those resolute and enterprising men who put their heads and lands to hazard in the game of politics naturally acquired, from the habit of playing for so deep a stake, a reckless and desperate turn of mind. It was, we seriously believe, as safe to be a highwayman as to be a distinguished leader of Opposition. This may serve to explain, and in some degree

Digitized by Google

to excuse, the violence with which the factions of that age are justly reproached. They were fighting, not merely for office, but for life. If they reposed for a moment from the work of agitation, if they suffered the public excitement to flag, they were lost men. Hume, in describing this state of things, has employed an image which seems hardly to suit the general simplicity of his style, but which is by no means too strong for the occasion. "Thus," says he, "the two parties actuated by mutual rage, but cooped up within the narrow limits of the law, levelled with poisoned daggers the most deadly blows against each other's breast, and buried in their factious divisions all regard to truth, honour, and humanity."

From this terrible evil the Revolution set us free. The law which secured to the judges their seats during life or good behaviour did something. The law subsequently passed for regulating trials in cases of treason did much more. The provisions of that law show, indeed, very little legislative skill. It is not framed on the principle of securing the innocent, but on the principle of giving a great chance of escape to the accused, whether innocent or guilty. This, however, is decidedly a fault on the right side. The evil produced by the occasional escape of a bad citizen is not to be compared with the evils of that Reign of Terror, for such it was, which preceded the Revolution. Since the passing of this law scarcely one single person has suffered death in England as a traitor, who had not been convicted on overwhelming evidence, to the satisfaction of all parties, of the highest crime against the State. Attempts have been made in times of great excitement, to bring in persons guilty of high treason for acts which, though sometimes highly blamable, did

Digitized by Google

not necessarily imply a design falling within the legal definition of treason. All those attempts have failed. During a hundred and forty years no statesman, while engaged in constitutional opposition to a government, has had the axe before his eyes. The smallest minorities, struggling against the most powerful majorities, in the most agitated times, have felt themselves perfectly secure. Pulteney and Fox were the two most distinguished leaders of Opposition since the Revolution. Both were personally obnoxious to the Court. But the utmost harm that the utmost anger of the Court could do to them was to strike off the "Right Honourable" from before their names.

But of all the reforms produced by the Revolution, perhaps the most important was the full establishment of the liberty of unlicensed printing. The Censorship which, under some form or other, had existed, with rare and short intermissions, under every government, monarchical or republican, from the time of Henry the Eighth downwards, expired, and has never since been renewed.

We are aware that the great improvements which we have recapitulated were, in many respects, imperfectly and unskilfully executed. The authors of those improvements sometimes, while they removed or mitigated a great practical evil, continued to recognise the erroneous principle from which that evil had sprung. Sometimes when they had adopted a sound principle, they shrank from following it to all the conclusions to which it would have led them. Sometimes they failed to perceive that the remedies which they applied to one disease of the State were certain to generate another disease, and to render another remedy necessary. Their knowledge was inferior to ours: nor were they

Digitized by Google

always able to act up to their knowledge. The pressure of circumstances, the necessity of compromising differences of opinion, the power and violence of the party which was altogether hostile to the new settlement, must be taken into the account. When these things are fairly weighed, there will, we think, be little difference of opinion among liberal and right-minded men as to the real value of what the great events of 1688 did for this country.

We have recounted what appear to us the most important of those changes which the Revolution produced in our laws. The changes which it produced in our laws, however, were not more important than the change which it indirectly produced in the public mind. The Whig party had during seventy years, an almost uninterrupted possession of power. It had always been the fundamental doctrine of that party, that power is a trust for the people; that it is given to magistrates, not for their own, but for the public advantage; that, where it is abused by magistrates, even by the highest of all, it may lawfully be withdrawn. It is perfectly true, that the Whigs were not more exempt than other men from the vices and infirmities of our nature, and that, when they had power, they sometimes abused it. But still they stood firm to their theory. That theory was the badge of their party. It was something more. It was the foundation on which rested the power of the houses of Nassau and Brunswick. Thus, there was a government interested in propagating a class of opinions which most governments are interested in discouraging, a government which looked with complacency on all speculations favourable to public liberty, and with extreme aversion on all speculations

Digitized by Google

favourable to arbitrary power. There was a King who decidedly preferred a republican to a believer in the divine right of kings; who considered every attempt to exalt his prerogative as an attack on his title; and who reserved all his favours for those who declaimed on the natural equality of men, and the popular origin of government. This was the state of things from the Revolution till the death of George the Second. The effect was what might have been expected. Even in that profession which has generally been most disposed to magnify the prerogative, a great change took place. Bishopric after bishopric and deanry after deanry were bestowed on Whigs and Latitudinarians. The consequence was that Whiggism and Latitudinarianism were professed by the ablest and most aspiring churchmen.

Hume complained bitterly of this at the close of his history. "The Whig party," says he, "for a course of near seventy years, has almost without interruption enjoyed the whole authority of government, and no honours or offices could be obtained but by their countenance and protection. But this event, which in some particulars has been advantageous to the state, has proved destructive to the truth of history, and has established many gross falsehoods, which it is unaccountable how any civilised nation could have embraced, with regard to its domestic occurrences. Compositions the most despicable, both for style and matter," — in a note he instances the writings of Locke, Sydney, Hoadley, and Rapin, — "have been extolled and propagated and read as if they had equalled the most celebrated remains of antiquity. And forgetting that a regard to liberty, though a laudable passion, ought commonly to be subservient

Digitized by Google

to a reverence for established government, the prevailing faction has celebrated only the partisans of the former." We will not here enter into an argument about the merit of Rapin's History or Locke's political speculations. We call Hume merely as evidence to a fact well known to all reading men, that the literature patronised by the English Court and the English ministry, during the first half of the eighteenth century, was of that kind which courtiers and ministers generally do all in their power to discountenance, and tended to inspire zeal for the liberties of the people rather than respect for the authority of the government.

There was still a very strong Tory party in England. But that party was in opposition. Many of its members still held the doctrine of passive obedience. But they did not admit that the existing dynasty had any claim to such obedience. They condemned resistance. But by resistance they meant the keeping out of James the Third, and not the turning out of George the Second. No Radical of our times could grumble more at the expenses of the royal household, could exert himself more strenuously to reduce the military establishment, could oppose with more earnestness every proposition for arming the executive with extraordinary powers, or could pour more unmitigated abuse on placemen and courtiers. If a writer were now, in a massive Dictionary, to define a Pensioner as a traitor and a slave, the Excise as a hateful tax, the Commissioners of the Excise as wretches, if he were to write a satire full of reflections on men who receive "the price of boroughs and of souls," who "explain their country's dear-bought rights away," or

Digitized by Google

"whom pensions can incite
To vote a patriot black, a courtier white,"

we should set him down for something more democratic than a Whig. Yet this was the language which Johnson, the most bigoted of Tories and High Churchmen, held under the administration of Walpole and Pelham.

Thus doctrines favourable to public liberty were inculcated alike by those who were in power and by those who were in opposition. It was by means of these doctrines alone that the former could prove that they had a King *de jure*. The servile theories of the latter did not prevent them from offering every molestation to one whom they considered as merely a King *de facto*. The attachment of one party to the House of Hanover, of the other to that of Stuart, induced both to talk a language much more favourable to popular rights than to monarchical power. What took place at the first representation of Cato is no bad illustration of the way in which the two great sections of the community almost invariably acted. A play, the whole merit of which consists in its stately rhetoric, a rhetoric sometimes not unworthy of Lucan, about hating tyrants and dying for freedom, is brought on the stage in a time of great political excitement. Both parties crowd to the theatre. Each affects to consider every line as a compliment to itself, and an attack on its opponents. The curtain falls amidst an unanimous roar of applause. The Whigs of the Kit Cat embrace the author, and assure him that he has rendered an inestimable service to liberty. The Tory secretary of state presents a purse to the chief actor for defending the cause of liberty so well. The history of that night was, in miniature, the history of two generations.

Digitized by Google

We well know how much sophistry there was in the reasonings, and how much exaggeration in the declamations of both parties. But when we compare the state in which political science was at the close of the reign of George the Second with the state in which it had been when James the Second came to the throne, it is impossible not to admit that a prodigious improvement had taken place. We are no admirers of the political doctrines laid down in Blackstone's Commentaries. But if we consider that those Commentaries were read with great applause in the very schools where, seventy or eighty years before, books had been publicly burned by order of the University of Oxford for containing the damnable doctrine that the English monarchy is limited and mixed, we cannot deny that a salutary change had taken place. "The Jesuits," says Pascal, in the last of his incomparable letters, "have obtained a Papal decree, condemning Galileo's doctrine about the motion of the earth. It is all in vain. If the world is really turning round, all mankind together will not be able to keep it from turning, or to keep themselves from turning with it." The decrees of Oxford were as ineffectual to stay the great moral and political revolution as those of the Vatican to stay the motion of our globe. That learned University found itself not only unable to keep the mass from moving, but unable to keep itself from moving along with the mass. Nor was the effect of the discussions and speculations of that period confined to our own country. While the Jacobite party was in the last dotage and weakness of its paralytic old age, the political philosophy of England began to produce a mighty effect on France, and, through France, on Europe.

Here another vast field opens itself before us. But

Digitized by Google

we must resolutely turn away from it. We will conclude by advising all our readers to study Sir James Mackintosh's valuable Fragment, and by expressing our hope that they will soon be able to study it without those accompaniments which have hitherto impeded its circulation.

Digitized by Google

LORD BACON.[1]

(*Edinburgh Review*, July, 1837.)

We return our hearty thanks to Mr. Montagu for this truly valuable work. From the opinions which he expresses as a biographer we often dissent. But about his merit as a collector of the materials out of which opinions are formed, there can be no dispute; and we readily acknowledge that we are in a great measure indebted to his minute and accurate researches for the means of refuting what we cannot but consider as his errors.

The labour which has been bestowed on this volume has been a labour of love. The writer is evidently enamoured of the subject. It fills his heart. It constantly overflows from his lips and his pen. Those who are acquainted with the Courts in which Mr. Montagu practises with so much ability and success well know how often he enlivens the discussion of a point of law by citing some weighty aphorism, or some brilliant illustration, from the *De Augmentis* or the *Novum Organum*. The Life before us doubtless owes much of its value to the honest and generous enthusiasm of the writer. This feeling has stimulated his activity, has sustained his perseverance, has called forth all his ingenuity and eloquence: but, on the other

[1] *The Works of Francis Bacon, Lord Chancellor of England. A new Edition.* By Basil Montagu, Esq. 16 vols. 8vo. London: 1825–1834.

Digitized by Google

hand, we must frankly say that it has, to a great extent, perverted his judgment.

We are by no means without sympathy for Mr. Montagu even in what we consider as his weakness. There is scarcely any delusion which has a better claim to be indulgently treated than that under the influence of which a man ascribes every moral excellence to those who have left imperishable monuments of their genius. The causes of this error lie deep in the inmost recesses of human nature. We are all inclined to judge of others as we find them. Our estimate of a character always depends much on the manner in which that character affects our own interests and passions. We find it difficult to think well of those by whom we are thwarted or depressed; and we are ready to admit every excuse for the vices of those who are useful or agreeable to us. This is, we believe, one of those illusions to which the whole human race is subject, and which experience and reflection can only partially remove. It is, in the phraseology of Bacon, one of the *idola tribus*. Hence it is that the moral character of a man eminent in letters or in the fine arts is treated, often by contemporaries, almost always by posterity, with extraordinary tenderness. The world derives pleasure and advantage from the performances of such a man. The number of those who suffer by his personal vices is small, even in his own time, when compared with the number of those to whom his talents are a source of gratification. In a few years all those whom he has injured disappear. But his works remain, and are a source of delight to millions. The genius of Sallust is still with us. But the Numidians whom he plundered, and the unfortunate husbands who caught him in their houses at unseasonable hours, are forgotten.

Digitized by Google

We suffer ourselves to be delighted by the keenness of Clarendon's observation, and by the sober majesty of his style, till we forget the oppressor and the bigot in the historian. Falstaff and Tom Jones have survived the gamekeepers whom Shakspeare cudgelled and the landladies whom Fielding bilked. A great writer is the friend and benefactor of his readers; and they cannot but judge of him under the deluding influence of friendship and gratitude. We all know how unwilling we are to admit the truth of any disgraceful story about a person whose society we like, and from whom we have received favours; how long we struggle against evidence, how fondly, when the facts cannot be disputed, we cling to the hope that there may be some explanation or some extenuating circumstance with which we are unacquainted. Just such is the feeling which a man of liberal education naturally entertains towards the great minds of former ages. The debt which he owes to them is incalculable. They have guided him to truth. They have filled his mind with noble and graceful images. They have stood by him in all vicissitudes, comforters in sorrow, nurses in sickness, companions in solitude. These friendships are exposed to no danger from the occurrences by which other attachments are weakened or dissolved. Time glides on; fortune is inconstant; tempers are soured; bonds which seemed indissoluble are daily sundered by interest, by emulation, or by caprice. But no such cause can affect the silent converse which we hold with the highest of human intellects. That placid intercourse is disturbed by no jealousies or resentments. These are the old friends who are never seen with new faces, who are the same in wealth and in poverty, in glory and in obscurity. With the dead there is no rivalry. In the

Digitized by Google

dead there is no change. Plato is never sullen. Cervantes is never petulant. Demosthenes never comes unseasonably. Dante never stays too long. No difference of political opinion can alienate Cicero. No heresy can excite the horror of Bossuet.

Nothing, then, can be more natural than that a person endowed with sensibility and imagination should entertain a respectful and affectionate feeling towards those great men with whose minds he holds daily communion. Yet nothing can be more certain than that such men have not always deserved to be regarded with respect or affection. Some writers, whose works will continue to instruct and delight mankind to the remotest ages, have been placed in such situations that their actions and motives are as well known to us as the actions and motives of one human being can be known to another; and unhappily their conduct has not always been such as an impartial judge can contemplate with approbation. But the fanaticism of the devout worshipper of genius is proof against all evidence and all argument. The character of his idol is matter of faith; and the province of faith is not to be invaded by reason. He maintains his superstition with a credulity as boundless, and a zeal as unscrupulous, as can be found in the most ardent partisans of religious or political factions. The most decisive proofs are rejected; the plainest rules of morality are explained away; extensive and important portions of history are completely distorted. The enthusiast misrepresents facts with all the effrontery of an advocate, and confounds right and wrong with all the dexterity of a Jesuit; and all this only in order that some man who has been in his grave during many ages may have a fairer character than he deserves.

Digitized by Google

Middleton's Life of Cicero is a striking instance of the influence of this sort of partiality. Never was there a character which it was easier to read than that of Cicero. Never was there a mind keener or more critical than that of Middleton. Had the biographer brought to the examination of his favourite statesman's conduct but a very small part of the acuteness and severity which he displayed when he was engaged in investigating the high pretensions of Epiphanius and Justin Martyr, he could not have failed to produce a most valuable history of a most interesting portion of time. But this most ingenious and learned man, though

> "So wary held and wise
> That, as 'twas said, he scarce received
> For gospel what the church believed,"

had a superstition of his own. The great Iconoclast was himself an idolater. The great *Avvocato del Diavolo*, while he disputed, with no small ability, the claims of Cyprian and Athanasius to a place in the Calendar, was himself composing a lying legend in honour of St. Tully. He was holding up as a model of every virtue a man whose talents and acquirements, indeed, can never be too highly extolled, and who was by no means destitute of amiable qualities, but whose whole soul was under the dominion of a girlish vanity and a craven fear. Actions for which Cicero himself, the most eloquent and skilful of advocates, could contrive no excuse, actions which in his confidential correspondence he mentioned with remorse and shame, are represented by his biographer as wise, virtuous, heroic. The whole history of that great revolution which overthrew the Roman aristocracy, the whole state of parties, the character of every public man, is

Digitized by Google

elaborately misrepresented, in order to make out something which may look like a defence of one most eloquent and accomplished trimmer.

The volume before us reminds us now and then of the Life of Cicero. But there is this marked difference. Dr. Middleton evidently had an uneasy consciousness of the weakness of his cause, and therefore resorted to the most disingenuous shifts, to unpardonable distortions and suppression of facts. Mr. Montagu's faith is sincere and implicit. He practises no trickery. He conceals nothing. He puts the facts before us in the full confidence that they will produce on our minds the effect which they have produced on his own. It is not till he comes to reason from facts to motives that his partiality shows itself; and then he leaves Middleton himself far behind. His work proceeds on the assumption that Bacon was an eminently virtuous man. From the tree Mr. Montagu judges of the fruit. He is forced to relate many actions which, if any man but Bacon had committed them, nobody would have dreamed of defending, actions which are readily and completely explained by supposing Bacon to have been a man whose principles were not strict, and whose spirit was not high, actions which can be explained in no other way without resorting to some grotesque hypothesis for which there is not a tittle of evidence. But any hypothesis is, in Mr. Montagu's opinion, more probable than that his hero should ever have done any thing very wrong.

This mode of defending Bacon seems to us by no means Baconian. To take a man's character for granted, and then from his character to infer the moral quality of all his actions, is surely a process the very reverse of that which is recommended in the *Novum*

Digitized by Google

Organum. Nothing, we are sure, could have led Mr. Montagu to depart so far from his master's precepts, except zeal for his master's honour. We shall follow a different course. We shall attempt, with the valuable assistance which Mr. Montagu has afforded us, to frame such an account of Bacon's life as may enable our readers correctly to estimate his character.

It is hardly necessary to say that Francis Bacon was the son of Sir Nicholas Bacon, who held the great seal of England during the first twenty years of the reign of Elizabeth. The fame of the father has been thrown into shade by that of the son. But Sir Nicholas was no ordinary man. He belonged to a set of men whom it is easier to describe collectively than separately, whose minds were formed by one system of discipline, who belonged to one rank in society, to one university, to one party, to one sect, to one administration, and who resembled each other so much in talents, in opinions, in habits, in fortunes, that one character, we had almost said one life, may, to a considerable extent, serve for them all.

They were the first generation of statesmen by profession that England produced. Before their time the division of labour had, in this respect, been very imperfect. Those who had directed public affairs had been, with few exceptions, warriors or priests; warriors whose rude courage was neither guided by science nor softened by humanity, priests whose learning and abilities were habitually devoted to the defence of tyranny and imposture. The Hotspurs, the Nevilles, the Cliffords, rough, illiterate, and unreflecting, brought to the council-board the fierce and imperious disposition which they had acquired amidst the tumult of predatory war, or in the gloomy repose of the garrisoned and moated

Digitized by Google

castle. On the other side was the calm and subtle prelate, versed in all that was then considered as learning, trained in the Schools to manage words, and in the confessional to manage hearts, seldom superstitious, but skilful in practising on the superstition of others, false, as it was natural that a man should be whose profession imposed on all who were not saints the necessity of being hypocrites, selfish, as it was natural that a man should be who could form no domestic ties and cherish no hope of legitimate posterity, more attached to his order than to his country, and guiding the politics of England with a constant side-glance at Rome.

But the increase of wealth, the progress of knowledge, and the reformation of religion produced a great change. The nobles ceased to be military chieftains; the priests ceased to possess a monopoly of learning; and a new and remarkable species of politicians appeared.

These men came from neither of the classes which had, till then, almost exclusively furnished ministers of state. They were all laymen; yet they were all men of learning; and they were all men of peace. They were not members of the aristocracy. They inherited no titles, no large domains, no armies of retainers, no fortified castles. Yet they were not low men, such as those whom princes, jealous of the power of a nobility, have sometimes raised from forges and cobblers' stalls to the highest situations. They were all gentlemen by birth. They had all received a liberal education. It is a remarkable fact that they were all members of the same university. The two great national seats of learning had even then acquired the characters which they still retain. In intellectual activity, and in readiness to admit improvements, the superiority was then, as it has ever since been, on the side of the less ancient

Digitized by Google

and splendid institution. Cambridge had the honour of educating those celebrated Protestant Bishops whom Oxford had the honour of burning; and at Cambridge were formed the minds of all those statesmen to whom chiefly is to be attributed the secure establishment of the reformed religion in the north of Europe.

The statesmen of whom we speak passed their youth surrounded by the incessant din of theological controversy. Opinions were still in a state of chaotic anarchy, intermingling, separating, advancing, receding. Sometimes the stubborn bigotry of the Conservatives seemed likely to prevail. Then the impetuous onset of the Reformers for a moment carried all before it. Then again the resisting mass made a desperate stand, arrested the movement, and forced it slowly back. The vacillation which at that time appeared in English legislation, and which it has been the fashion to attribute to the caprice and to the power of one or two individuals, was truly a national vacillation. It was not only in the mind of Henry that the new theology obtained the ascendant one day, and that the lessons of the nurse and of the priest regained their influence on the morrow. It was not only in the House of Tudor that the husband was exasperated by the opposition of the wife, that the son dissented from the opinions of the father, that the brother persecuted the sister, that one sister persecuted another. The principles of Conservation and Reform carried on their warfare in every part of society, in every congregation, in every school of learning, round the hearth of every private family, in the recesses of every reflecting mind.

It was in the midst of this ferment that the minds of the persons whom we are describing were developed. They were born Reformers. They belonged by na-

Digitized by Google

ture to that order of men who always form the front ranks in the great intellectual progress. They were, therefore, one and all, Protestants. In religious matters, however, though there is no reason to doubt that they were sincere, they were by no means zealous. None of them chose to run the smallest personal risk during the reign of Mary. None of them favoured the unhappy attempt of Northumberland in favour of his daughter-in-law. None of them shared in the desperate councils of Wyatt. They contrived to have business on the Continent; or, if they staid in England, they heard mass and kept Lent with great decorum. When those dark and perilous years had gone by, and when the crown had descended to a new sovereign, they took the lead in the reformation of the Church. But they proceeded, not with the impetuosity of theologians, but with the calm determination of statesmen. They acted, not like men who considered the Romish worship as a system too offensive to God, and too destructive of souls to be tolerated for an hour, but like men who regarded the points in dispute among Christians as in themselves unimportant, and who were not restrained by any scruple of conscience from professing, as they had before professed, the Catholic faith of Mary, the Protestant faith of Edward, or any of the numerous intermediate combinations which the caprice of Henry and the servile policy of Cranmer had formed out of the doctrines of both the hostile parties. They took a deliberate view of the state of their own country and of the Continent: they satisfied themselves as to the leaning of the public mind; and they chose their side. They placed themselves at the head of the Protestants of Europe, and staked all their fame and fortunes on the success of their party.

Digitized by Google

It is needless to relate how dexterously, how resolutely, how gloriously they directed the politics of England during the eventful years which followed, how they succeeded in uniting their friends and separating their enemies, how they humbled the pride of Philip, how they backed the unconquerable spirit of Coligni, how they rescued Holland from tyranny, how they founded the maritime greatness of their country, how they outwitted the artful politicians of Italy, and tamed the ferocious chieftains of Scotland. It is impossible to deny that they committed many acts which would justly bring on a statesman of our time censures of the most serious kind. But, when we consider the state of morality in their age, and the unscrupulous character of the adversaries against whom they had to contend, we are forced to admit that it is not without reason that their names are still held in veneration by their countrymen.

There were, doubtless, many diversities in their intellectual and moral character. But there was a strong family likeness. The constitution of their minds was remarkably sound. No particular faculty was preeminently developed; but manly health and vigour were equally diffused through the whole. They were men of letters. Their minds were by nature and by exercise well fashioned for speculative pursuits. It was by circumstances, rather than by any strong bias of inclination, that they were led to take a prominent part in active life. In active life, however, no men could be more perfectly free from the faults of mere theorists and pedants. No men observed more accurately the signs of the times. No men had a greater practical acquaintance with human nature. Their policy was generally characterized

Digitized by Google

rather by vigilance, by moderation, and by firmness, than by invention, or by the spirit of enterprise.

They spoke and wrote in a manner worthy of their excellent sense. Their eloquence was less copious and less ingenious, but far purer and more manly than that of the succeeding generation. It was the eloquence of men who had lived with the first translators of the Bible, and with the authors of the Book of Common Prayer. It was luminous, dignified, solid, and very slightly tainted with that affectation which deformed the style of the ablest men of the next age. If, as sometimes chanced, these politicians were under the necessity of taking a part in the theological controversies on which the dearest interests of kingdoms were then staked, they acquitted themselves as if their whole lives had been passed in the Schools and the Convocation.

There was something in the temper of these celebrated men which secured them against the proverbial inconstancy both of the court and of the multitude. No intrigue, no combination of rivals, could deprive them of the confidence of their Sovereign. No parliament attacked their influence. No mob coupled their names with any odious grievance. Their power ended only with their lives. In this respect, their fate presents a most remarkable contrast to that of the enterprising and brilliant politicians of the preceding and of the succeeding generation. Burleigh was minister during forty years. Sir Nicholas Bacon held the great seal more than twenty years. Sir Walter Mildmay was Chancellor of the Exchequer twenty-three years. Sir Thomas Smith was Secretary of State eighteen years; Sir Francis Walsingham about as long. They all died in office, and in the enjoyment of public re-

Digitized by Google

spect and royal favour. Far different had been the fate of Wolsey, Cromwell, Norfolk, Somerset, and Northumberland. Far different also was the fate of Essex, of Raleigh, and of the still more illustrious man whose life we propose to consider.

The explanation of this circumstance is perhaps contained in the motto which Sir Nicholas Bacon inscribed over the entrance of his hall at Gorhambury, *Mediocria firma.* This maxim was constantly borne in mind by himself and his colleagues. They were more solicitous to lay the foundations of their power deep than to raise the structure to a conspicuous but insecure height. None of them aspired to be sole Minister. None of them provoked envy by an ostentatious display of wealth and influence. None of them affected to outshine the ancient aristocracy of the kingdom. They were free from that childish love of titles which characterized the successful courtiers of the generation which preceded them, and of that which followed them. Only one of those whom we have named was made a peer; and he was content with the lowest degree of the peerage. As to money, none of them could, in that age, justly be considered as rapacious. Some of them would, even in our time, deserve the praise of eminent disinterestedness. Their fidelity to the State was incorruptible. Their private morals were without stain. Their households were sober and well-governed.

Among these statesmen Sir Nicholas Bacon was generally considered as ranking next to Burleigh. He was called by Camden "Sacris conciliis alterum columen;" and by George Buchanan,

"diu Britannici
Regni secundum columen."

Digitized by Google

The second wife of Sir Nicholas and mother of Francis Bacon was Anne, one of the daughters of Sir Anthony Cooke, a man of distinguished learning who had been tutor to Edward the Sixth. Sir Anthony had paid considerable attention to the education of his daughters, and lived to see them all splendidly and happily married. Their classical acquirements made them conspicuous even among the women of fashion of that age. Katherine, who became Lady Killigrew, wrote Latin Hexameters and Pentameters which would appear with credit in the *Musæ Etonenses*. Mildred, the wife of Lord Burleigh, was described by Roger Ascham as the best Greek scholar among the young women of England, Lady Jane Grey always excepted. Anne, the mother of Francis Bacon, was distinguished both as a linguist and as a theologian. She corresponded in Greek with Bishop Jewel, and translated his *Apologia* from the Latin, so correctly that neither he nor Archbishop Parker could suggest a single alteration. She also translated a series of sermons on fate and free-will from the Tuscan of Bernardo Ochino. This fact is the more curious, because Ochino was one of that small and audacious band of Italian reformers, anathematized alike by Wittenberg, by Geneva, by Zurich, and by Rome, from which the Socinian sect deduces its origin.

Lady Bacon was doubtless a lady of highly cultivated mind after the fashion of her age. But we must not suffer ourselves to be deluded into the belief that she and her sisters were more accomplished women than many who are now living. On this subject there is, we think, much misapprehension. We have often heard men who wish, as almost all men of sense wish, that women should be highly educated, speak with rapture of

Digitized by Google

the English ladies of the sixteenth century, and lament that they can find no modern damsel resembling those fair pupils of Ascham and Aylmer who compared, over their embroidery, the styles of Isocrates and Lysias, and who, while the horns were sounding and the dogs in full cry, sat in the lonely oriel, with eyes rivetted to that immortal page which tells how meekly and bravely the first great martyr of intellectual liberty took the cup from his weeping gaoler. But surely these complaints have very little foundation. We would by no means disparage the ladies of the sixteenth century or their pursuits. But we conceive that those who extol them at the expense of the women of our time forget one very obvious and very important circumstance. In the time of Henry the Eighth and Edward the Sixth, a person who did not read Greek and Latin could read nothing, or next to nothing. The Italian was the only modern language which possessed any thing that could be called a literature. All the valuable books then extant in all the vernacular dialects of Europe would hardly have filled a single shelf. England did not yet possess Shakspeare's plays and the Fairy Queen, nor France Montaigne's Essays, nor Spain Don Quixote. In looking round a well-furnished library, how many English or French books can we find which were extant when Lady Jane Grey and Queen Elizabeth received their education? Chaucer, Gower, Froissart, Comines, Rabelais, nearly complete the list. It was therefore absolutely necessary that a woman should be uneducated or classically educated. Indeed, without a knowledge of one of the ancient languages no person could then have any clear notion of what was passing in the political, the literary, or the religious world. The Latin was in the sixteenth century all

Digitized by Google

and more than all that the French was in the eighteenth. It was the language of courts as well as of the schools. It was the language of diplomacy; it was the language of theological and political controversy. Being a fixed language, while the living languages were in a state of fluctuation, and being universally known to the learned and the polite, it was employed by almost every writer who aspired to a wide and durable reputation. A person who was ignorant of it was shut out from all acquaintance, not merely with Cicero and Virgil, not merely with heavy treatises on canon-law and school-divinity, but with the most interesting memoirs, state papers, and pamphlets of his own time, nay even with the most admired poetry and the most popular squibs which appeared on the fleeting topics of the day, with Buchanan's complimentary verses, with Erasmus's dialogues, with Hutten's epistles.

This is no longer the case. All political and religious controversy is now conducted in the modern languages. The ancient tongues are used only in comments on the ancient writers. The great productions of Athenian and Roman genius are indeed still what they were. But though their positive value is unchanged, their relative value, when compared with the whole mass of mental wealth possessed by mankind, has been constantly falling. They were the intellectual all of our ancestors. They are but a part of our treasures. Over what tragedy could Lady Jane Grey have wept, over what comedy could she have smiled, if the ancient dramatists had not been in her library? A modern reader can make shift without Œdipus and Medea, while he possesses Othello and Hamlet. If he knows nothing of Pyrgopolynices and Thraso, he is familiar with Bobadil, and Bessus, and Pistol, and

Digitized by Google

Parolles. If he cannot enjoy the delicious irony of Plato, he may find some compensation in that of Pascal. If he is shut out from Nephelococcygia, he may take refuge in Lilliput. We are guilty, we hope, of no irreverence towards those great nations to which the human race owes art, science, taste, civil and intellectual freedom, when we say, that the stock bequeathed by them to us has been so carefully improved that the accumulated interest now exceeds the principal. We believe that the books which have been written in the languages of western Europe, during the last two hundred and fifty years, — translations from the ancient languages of course included, — are of greater value than all the books which at the beginning of that period were extant in the world. With the modern languages of Europe English women are at least as well acquainted as English men. When, therefore, we compare the acquirements of Lady Jane Grey with those of an accomplished young woman of our own time, we have no hesitation in awarding the superiority to the latter. We hope that our readers will pardon this digression. It is long; but it can hardly be called unseasonable, if it tends to convince them that they are mistaken in thinking that the great-great-grandmothers of their great-great-grandmothers were superior women to their sisters and their wives.

Francis Bacon, the youngest son of Sir Nicholas, was born at York House, his father's residence in the Strand, on the twenty-second of January, 1561. The health of Francis was very delicate; and to this circumstance may be partly attributed that gravity of carriage, and that love of sedentary pursuits, which distinguished him from other boys. Every body knows

Digitized by Google

how much his premature readiness of wit and sobriety of deportment amused the Queen, and how she used to call him her young Lord Keeper. We are told that, while still a mere child, he stole away from his playfellows to a vault in St. James's Fields, for the purpose of investigating the cause of a singular echo which he had observed there. It is certain that, at only twelve, he busied himself with very ingenious speculations on the art of legerdemain; a subject which, as Professor Dugald Stewart has most justly observed, merits much more attention from philosophers than it has ever received. These are trifles. But the eminence which Bacon afterwards attained makes them interesting.

In the thirteenth year of his age he was entered at Trinity College, Cambridge. That celebrated school of learning enjoyed the peculiar favour of the Lord Treasurer and the Lord Keeper, and acknowledged the advantages which it derived from their patronage in a public letter which bears date just a month after the admission of Francis Bacon. The master was Whitgift, afterwards Archbishop of Canterbury, a narrow-minded, mean, and tyrannical priest, who gained power by servility and adulation, and employed it in persecuting both those who agreed with Calvin about Church Government, and those who differed from Calvin touching the doctrine of Reprobation. He was now in a chrysalis state, putting off the worm and putting on the dragon-fly, a kind of intermediate grub between sycophant and oppressor. He was indemnifying himself for the court which he found it expedient to pay to the Ministers by exercising much petty tyranny within his own college. It would be unjust, however, to deny him the praise of having rendered about this time one important service to letters. He stood up manfully

Digitized by Google

against those who wished to make Trinity College a mere appendage to Westminster School; and by this act, the only good act, as far as we remember, of his long public life, he saved the noblest place of education in England from the degrading fate of King's College and New College.

It has often been said that Bacon, while still at College, planned that great intellectual revolution with which his name is inseparably connected. The evidence on this subject, however, is hardly sufficient to prove what is in itself so improbable as that any definite scheme of that kind should have been so early formed, even by so powerful and active a mind. But it is certain that, after a residence of three years at Cambridge, Bacon departed, carrying with him a profound contempt for the course of study pursued there, a fixed conviction that the system of academic education in England was radically vicious, a just scorn for the trifles on which the followers of Aristotle had wasted their powers, and no great reverence for Aristotle himself.

In his sixteenth year he visited Paris, and resided there for some time, under the care of Sir Amias Paulet, Elizabeth's minister at the French court, and one of the ablest and most upright of the many valuable servants whom she employed. France was at that time in a deplorable state of agitation. The Huguenots and the Catholics were mustering all their force for the fiercest and most protracted of their many struggles; while the Prince, whose duty it was to protect and to restrain both, had by his vices and follies, degraded himself so deeply that he had no authority over either. Bacon, however, made a tour through several provinces, and appears to have passed some time at

Digitized by Google

Poitiers. We have abundant proof that during his stay on the Continent he did not neglect literary and scientific pursuits. But his attention seems to have been chiefly directed to statistics and diplomacy. It was at this time that he wrote those Notes on the State of Europe which are printed in his works. He studied the principles of the art of deciphering with great interest, and invented one cipher so ingenious that, many years later, he thought it deserving of a place in the *De Augmentis*. In February, 1580, while engaged in these pursuits, he received intelligence of the almost sudden death of his father, and instantly returned to England.

His prospects were greatly overcast by this event. He was most desirous to obtain a provision which might enable him to devote himself to literature and politics. He applied to the Government; and it seems strange that he should have applied in vain. His wishes were moderate. His hereditary claims on the administration were great. He had himself been favourably noticed by the Queen. His uncle was Prime Minister. His own talents were such as any minister might have been eager to enlist in the public service. But his solicitations were unsuccessful. The truth is that the Cecils disliked him, and did all that they could decently do to keep him down. It has never been alleged that Bacon had done any thing to merit this dislike; nor is it at all probable that a man whose temper was naturally mild, whose manners were courteous, who, through life, nursed his fortunes with the utmost care, and who was fearful even to a fault of offending the powerful, would have given any just cause of displeasure to a kinsman who had the means of rendering him essential service and of doing him irreparable injury. The real expla-

Digitized by Google

nation, we believe, is this. Robert Cecil, the Treasurer's second son, was younger by a few months than Bacon. He had been educated with the utmost care, had been initiated while still a boy, in the mysteries of diplomacy and court-intrigue, and was just at this time about to be produced on the stage of public life. The wish nearest to Burleigh's heart was that his own greatness might descend to this favourite child. But even Burleigh's fatherly partiality could hardly prevent him from perceiving that Robert, with all his abilities and acquirements, was no match for his cousin Francis. This seems to us the only rational explanation of the Treasurer's conduct. Mr. Montagu is more charitable. He supposes that Burleigh was influenced merely by affection for his nephew, and was "little disposed to encourage him to rely on others rather than on himself, and to venture on the quicksands of politics, instead of the certain profession of the law." If such were Burleigh's feelings, it seems strange that he should have suffered his son to venture on those quicksands from which he so carefully preserved his nephew. But the truth is that, if Burleigh had been so disposed, he might easily have secured to Bacon a comfortable provision which should have been exposed to no risk. And it is certain that he showed as little disposition to enable his nephew to live by a profession as to enable him to live without a profession. That Bacon himself attributed the conduct of his relatives to jealousy of his superior talents, we have not the smallest doubt. In a letter written many years later to Villiers, he expresses himself thus: "Countenance, encourage, and advance able men in all kinds, degrees, and professions. For in the time of the Cecils, the father and the son, able men were by design and of purpose suppressed."

Digitized by Google

Whatever Burleigh's motives might be, his purpose was unalterable. The supplications which Francis addressed to his uncle and aunt were earnest, humble, and almost servile. He was the most promising and accomplished young man of his time. His father had been the brother-in-law, the most useful colleague, the nearest friend of the Minister. But all this availed poor Francis nothing. He was forced, much against his will, to betake himself to the study of the law. He was admitted at Gray's Inn; and, during some years he laboured there in obscurity.

What the extent of his legal attainments may have been it is difficult to say. It was not hard for a man of his powers to acquire that very moderate portion of technical knowledge which, when joined to quickness, tact, wit, ingenuity, eloquence, and knowledge of the world, is sufficient to raise an advocate to the highest professional eminence. The general opinion appears to have been that which was on one occasion expressed by Elizabeth. "Bacon," said she, "hath a great wit and much learning; but in law showeth to the uttermost of his knowledge, and is not deep." The Cecils, we suspect, did their best to spread this opinion by whispers and insinuations. Coke openly proclaimed it with that rancorous insolence which was habitual to him. No reports are more readily believed than those which disparage genius, and soothe the envy of conscious mediocrity. It must have been inexpressibly consoling to a stupid sergeant, the forerunner of him who, a hundred and fifty years later, "shook his head at Murray as a wit," to know that the most profound thinker and the most accomplished orator of the age was very imperfectly acquainted with the law touching *bastard eigné* and *mulier puisné*, and confounded

Digitized by Google

the right of free fishery with that of common of piscary.

It is certain that no man in that age, or indeed during the century and a half which followed, was better acquainted than Bacon with the philosophy of law. His technical knowledge was quite sufficient, with the help of his admirable talents and of his insinuating address, to procure clients. He rose very rapidly into business, and soon entertained hopes of being called within the bar. He applied to Lord Burleigh for that purpose, but received a testy refusal. Of the grounds of that refusal we can, in some measure, judge by Bacon's answer, which is still extant. It seems that the old Lord, whose temper age and gout had by no means altered for the better, and who loved to mark his dislike of the showy, quick-witted young men of the rising generation, took this opportunity to read Francis a very sharp lecture on his vanity and want of respect for his betters. Francis returned a most submissive reply, thanked the Treasurer for the admonition, and promised to profit by it. Strangers meanwhile were less unjust to the young barrister than his nearest kinsman had been. In his twenty-sixth year he became a bencher of his Inn; and two years later he was appointed Lent reader. At length in 1590, he obtained for the first time some show of favour from the Court. He was sworn in Queen's Counsel extraordinary. But this mark of honour was not accompanied by any pecuniary emolument. He continued, therefore, to solicit his powerful relatives for some provision which might enable him to live without drudging at his profession. He bore, with a patience and serenity which, we fear, bordered on meanness, the morose humours of his uncle, and the sneering reflections which

Digitized by Google

his cousin cast on speculative men, lost in philosophical dreams, and too wise to be capable of transacting public business. At length the Cecils were generous enough to procure for him the reversion of the Registrarship of the Star Chamber. This was a lucrative place; but, as many years elapsed before it fell in, he was still under the necessity of labouring for his daily bread.

In the Parliament which was called in 1593 he sat as member for the county of Middlesex, and soon attained eminence as a debater. It is easy to perceive from the scanty remains of his oratory that the same compactness of expression and richness of fancy which appear in his writings characterized his speeches; and that his extensive acquaintance with literature and history enabled him to entertain his audience with a vast variety of illustrations and allusions which were generally happy and apposite, but which were probably not least pleasing to the taste of that age when they were such as would now be thought childish or pedantic. It is evident also that he was, as indeed might have been expected, perfectly free from those faults which are generally found in an advocate who, after having risen to eminence at the bar, enters the House of Commons; that it was his habit to deal with every great question, not in small detached portions, but as a whole; that he refined little, and that his reasonings were those of a capacious rather than a subtle mind. Ben Jonson, a most unexceptionable judge, has described Bacon's eloquence in words, which, though often quoted, will bear to be quoted again. "There happened in my time one noble speaker who was full of gravity in his speaking. His language, where he could spare or pass by a jest, was nobly censorious. No man ever spoke more neatly,

Digitized by Google

more pressly, more weightily, or suffered less emptiness, less idleness, in what he uttered. No member of his speech but consisted of his own graces. His hearers could not cough or look aside from him without loss. He commanded where he spoke, and had his judges angry and pleased at his devotion. No man had their affections more in his power. The fear of every man that heard him was lest he should make an end." From the mention which is made of judges, it would seem that Jonson had heard Bacon only at the Bar. Indeed we imagine that the House of Commons was then almost inaccessible to strangers. It is not probable that a man of Bacon's nice observation would speak in Parliament exactly as he spoke in the Court of Queen's Bench. But the graces of manner and language must, to a great extent, have been common between the Queen's Counsel and the Knight of the Shire.

Bacon tried to play a very difficult game in politics. He wished to be at once a favourite at Court and popular with the multitude. If any man could have succeeded in this attempt, a man of talents so rare, of judgment so prematurely ripe, of temper so calm, and of manners so plausible, might have been expected to succeed. Nor indeed did he wholly fail. Once, however, he indulged in a burst of patriotism which cost him a long and bitter remorse, and which he never ventured to repeat. The Court asked for large subsidies and for speedy payment. The remains of Bacon's speech breathe all the spirit of the Long Parliament. "The gentlemen," said he, "must sell their plate, and the farmers their brass pots, ere this will be paid; and for us, we are here to search the wounds of the realm, and not to skim them over. The dangers

Digitized by Google

are these. First, we shall breed discontent and endanger her Majesty's safety, which must consist more in the love of the people than their wealth. Secondly, this being granted in this sort, other princes hereafter will look for the like; so that we shall put an evil precedent on ourselves and our posterity; and in histories, it is to be observed, of all nations the English are not to be subject, base, or taxable." The Queen and her ministers resented this outbreak of public spirit in the highest manner. Indeed, many an honest member of the House of Commons had, for a much smaller matter, been sent to the Tower by the proud and hot-blooded Tudors. The young patriot condescended to make the most abject apologies. He adjured the Lord Treasurer to show some favour to his poor servant and ally. He bemoaned himself to the Lord Keeper, in a letter which may keep in countenance the most unmanly of the epistles which Cicero wrote during his banishment. The lesson was not thrown away. Bacon never offended in the same manner again.

He was now satisfied that he had little to hope from the patronage of those powerful kinsmen whom he had solicited during twelve years with such meek pertinacity; and he began to look towards a different quarter. Among the courtiers of Elizabeth had lately appeared a new favourite, young, noble, wealthy, accomplished, eloquent, brave, generous, aspiring; a favourite who had obtained from the grey-headed Queen such marks of regard as she had scarce vouchsafed to Leicester in the season of the passions; who was at once the ornament of the palace and the idol of the city; who was the common patron of men of letters and of men of the sword; who was the common

Digitized by Google

refuge of the persecuted Catholic and of the persecuted Puritan. The calm prudence which had enabled Burleigh to shape his course through so many dangers, and the vast experience which he had acquired in dealing with two generations of colleagues and rivals, seemed scarcely sufficient to support him in this new competition; and Robert Cecil sickened with fear and envy as he contemplated the rising fame and influence of Essex.

The history of the factions which, towards the close of the reign of Elizabeth, divided her court and her council, though pregnant with instruction, is by no means interesting or pleasing. Both parties employed the means which are familiar to unscrupulous statesmen; and neither had, or even pretended to have, any important end in view. The public mind was then reposing from one great effort, and collecting strength for another. That impetuous and appalling rush with which the human intellect had moved forward in the career of truth and liberty, during the fifty years which followed the separation of Luther from the communion of the Church of Rome, was now over. The boundary between Protestantism and Popery had been fixed very nearly where it still remains. England, Scotland, the Northern kingdoms were on one side; Ireland, Spain, Portugal, Italy, on the other. The line of demarcation ran, as it still runs, through the midst of the Netherlands, of Germany, and of Switzerland, dividing province from province, electorate from electorate, and canton from canton. France might be considered as a debatable land, in which the contest was still undecided. Since that time, the two religions have done little more than maintain their ground. A few occasional incursions have been made. But the general frontier re-

Digitized by Google

mains the same. During two hundred and fifty years no great society has risen up like one man, and emancipated itself by one mighty effort from the superstition of ages. This spectacle was common in the sixteenth century. Why has it ceased to be so? Why has so violent a movement been followed by so long a repose? The doctrines of the Reformers are not less agreeable to reason or to revelation now than formerly. The public mind is assuredly not less enlightened now than formerly. Why is it that Protestantism, after carrying every thing before it in a time of comparatively little knowledge and little freedom, should make no perceptible progress in a reasoning and tolerant age; that the Luthers, the Calvins, the Knoxes, the Zwingles, should have left no successors; that during two centuries and a half fewer converts should have been brought over from the Church of Rome than at the time of the Reformation were sometimes gained in a year? This has always appeared to us one of the most curious and interesting problems in history. On some future occasion we may perhaps attempt to solve it. At present it is enough to say that, at the close of Elizabeth's reign, the Protestant party, to borrow the language of the Apocalypse, had left its first love and had ceased to do its first works.

The great struggle of the sixteenth century was over. The great struggle of the seventeenth century had not commenced. The confessors of Mary's reign were dead. The members of the Long Parliament were still in their cradles. The Papists had been deprived of all power in the state. The Puritans had not yet attained any formidable extent of power. True it is that a student, well acquainted with the history of the next generation, can easily discern in the proceedings

Digitized by Google

of the last Parliaments of Elizabeth the germ of great and ever memorable events. But to the eye of a contemporary nothing of this appeared. The two sections of ambitious men who were struggling for power differed from each other on no important public question. Both belonged to the Established Church. Both professed boundless loyalty to the Queen. Both approved the war with Spain. There is not, so far as we are aware, any reason to believe that they entertained different views concerning the succession of the Crown. Certainly neither faction had any great measure of reform in view. Neither attempted to redress any public grievance. The most odious and pernicious grievance under which the nation then suffered was a source of profit to both, and was defended by both with equal zeal. Raleigh held a monopoly of cards, Essex a monopoly of sweet wines. In fact, the only ground of quarrel between the parties was that they could not agree as to their respective shares of power and patronage.

Nothing in the political conduct of Essex entitles him to esteem; and the pity with which we regard his early and terrible end is diminished by the consideration, that he put to hazard the lives and fortunes of his most attached friends, and endeavoured to throw the whole country into confusion, for objects purely personal. Still, it is impossible not to be deeply interested for a man so brave, high-spirited, and generous; for a man who, while he conducted himself towards his sovereign with a boldness such as was then found in no other subject, conducted himself towards his dependents with a delicacy such as has rarely been found in any other patron. Unlike the vulgar herd of benefactors, he desired to inspire, not gratitude, but affection. He

Digitized by Google

tried to make those whom he befriended feel towards him as towards an equal. His mind, ardent, susceptible, naturally disposed to admiration of all that is great and beautiful, was fascinated by the genius and accomplishments of Bacon. A close friendship was soon formed between them, a friendship destined to have a dark, a mournful, a shameful end.

In 1594 the office of Attorney-General became vacant, and Bacon hoped to obtain it. Essex made his friend's cause his own, sued, expostulated, promised, threatened, but all in vain. It is probable that the dislike felt by the Cecils for Bacon had been increased by the connection which he had lately formed with the Earl. Robert was then on the point of being made Secretary of State. He happened one day to be in the same coach with Essex, and a remarkable conversation took place between them. "My Lord," said Sir Robert, "the Queen has determined to appoint an Attorney-General without more delay. I pray your Lordship to let me know whom you will favour." "I wonder at your question," replied the Earl. "You cannot but know that resolutely, against all the world, I stand for your cousin, Francis Bacon." "Good Lord!" cried Cecil, unable to bridle his temper, "I wonder your Lordship should spend your strength on so unlikely a matter. Can you name one precedent of so raw a youth promoted to so great a place?" This objection came with a singularly bad grace from a man who, though younger than Bacon, was in daily expectation of being made Secretary of State. The blot was too obvious to be missed by Essex, who seldom forbore to speak his mind. "I have made no search," said he, "for precedents of young men who have filled the office of Attorney-General. But I could name to you,

Digitized by Google

Sir Robert, a man younger than Francis, less learned, and equally inexperienced, who is suing and striving with all his might for an office of far greater weight." Sir Robert had nothing to say but that he thought his own abilities equal to the place which he hoped to obtain, and that his father's long services deserved such a mark of gratitude from the Queen; as if his abilities were comparable to his cousin's, or as if Sir Nicholas Bacon had done no service to the State. Cecil then hinted that, if Bacon would be satisfied with the Solicitorship, that might be of easier digestion to the Queen. "Digest me no digestions," said the generous and ardent Earl. "The Attorneyship for Francis is that I must have; and in that I will spend all my power, might, authority, and amity; and with tooth and nail procure the same for him against whomsoever; and whosoever getteth this office out of my hands for any other, before he have it, it shall cost him the coming by. And this be you assured of, Sir Robert, for now I fully declare myself; and for my own part, Sir Robert, I think strange both of my Lord Treasurer and you, that can have the mind to seek the preference of a stranger before so near a kinsman; for if you weigh in a balance the parts every way of his competitor and him, only excepting five poor years of admitting to a house of court before Francis, you shall find in all other respects whatsoever no comparison between them."

When the office of Attorney-General was filled up, the Earl pressed the Queen to make Bacon Solicitor-General, and, on this occasion, the old Lord Treasurer professed himself not unfavourable to his nephew's pretensions. But, after a contest which lasted more than a year and a half, and in which Essex, to use his own

Digitized by Google

words, "spent all his power, might, authority, and amity," the place was given to another. Essex felt this disappointment keenly, but found consolation in the most munificent and delicate liberality. He presented Bacon with an estate worth near two thousand pounds, situated at Twickenham; and this, as Bacon owned many years after, "with so kind and noble circumstances as the manner was worth more than the matter."

It was soon after these events that Bacon first appeared before the public as a writer. Early in 1597 he published a small volume of Essays, which was afterwards enlarged by successive additions to many times its original bulk. This little work was, as it well deserved to be, exceedingly popular. It was reprinted in a few months; it was translated into Latin, French, and Italian; and it seems to have at once established the literary reputation of its author. But, though Bacon's reputation rose, his fortunes were still depressed. He was in great pecuniary difficulties; and on one occasion, was arrested in the street at the suit of a goldsmith for a debt of three hundred pounds, and was carried to a spunging-house in Coleman Street.

The kindness of Essex was in the mean time indefatigable. In 1596 he sailed on his memorable expedition to the coast of Spain. At the very moment of his embarkation, he wrote to several of his friends, commending to them, during his own absence, the interests of Bacon. He returned, after performing the most brilliant military exploit that was achieved on the Continent by English arms during the long interval which elapsed between the battle of Agincourt and that of Blenheim. His valour, his talents, his humane and generous disposition, had made him the idol of his

Digitized by Google

countrymen, and had extorted praise from the enemies whom he had conquered.[1] He had always been proud and headstrong; and his splendid success seems to have rendered his faults more offensive than ever. But to his friend Francis he was still the same. Bacon had some thoughts of making his fortune by marriage, and had begun to pay court to a widow of the name of Hatton. The eccentric manners and violent temper of this woman made her a disgrace and a torment to her connections. But Bacon was not aware of her faults, or was disposed to overlook them for the sake of her ample fortune. Essex pleaded his friend's cause with his usual ardour. The letters which the Earl addressed to Lady Hatton and to her mother are still extant, and are highly honourable to him. "If," he wrote, "she were my sister or my daughter, I protest I would as confidently resolve to further it as I now persuade you;" and again, "if my faith be any thing, I protest, if I had one as near me as she is to you, I had rather match her with him, than with men of far greater titles." The suit, happily for Bacon, was unsuccessful. The lady indeed was kind to him in more ways than one. She rejected him; and she accepted his enemy. She married that narrow-minded, bad-hearted pedant, Sir Edward Coke, and did her best to make him as miserable as he deserved to be.

The fortunes of Essex had now reached their height, and began to decline. He possessed indeed all the qualities which raise men to greatness rapidly. But he had neither the virtues or the vices which enable men to retain greatness long. His frankness, his keen sensibility to insult and injustice were by no means

[1] See Cervantes's *Novela de la Española Inglesa.*

Digitized by Google

agreeable to a sovereign naturally impatient of opposition, and accustomed, during forty years, to the most extravagant flattery and the most abject submission. The daring and contemptuous manner in which he bade defiance to his enemies excited their deadly hatred. His administration in Ireland was unfortunate, and in many respects highly blamable. Though his brilliant courage and his impetuous activity fitted him admirably for such enterprises as that of Cadiz, he did not possess the caution, patience, and resolution necessary for the conduct of a protracted war, in which difficulties were to be gradually surmounted, in which much discomfort was to be endured, and in which few splendid exploits could be achieved. For the civil duties of his high place he was still less qualified. Though eloquent and accomplished, he was in no sense a statesman. The multitude indeed still continued to regard even his faults with fondness. But the Court had ceased to give him credit, even for the merit which he really possessed. The person on whom, during the decline of his influence, he chiefly depended, to whom he confided his perplexities, whose advice he solicited, whose intercession he employed, was his friend Bacon. The lamentable truth must be told. This friend, so loved, so trusted, bore a principal part in ruining the Earl's fortunes, in shedding his blood, and in blackening his memory.

But let us be just to Bacon. We believe that, to the last, he had no wish to injure Essex. Nay, we believe that he sincerely exerted himself to serve Essex, as long as he thought he could serve Essex without injuring himself. The advice which he gave to his noble benefactor was generally most judicious. He did all in his power to dissuade the Earl from accepting the Government of Ireland. "For," says he,

Digitized by Google

"I did as plainly see his overthrow chained as it were by destiny to that journey, as it is possible for a man to ground a judgment upon future contingents." The prediction was accomplished. Essex returned in disgrace. Bacon attempted to mediate between his friend and the Queen; and, we believe, honestly employed all his address for that purpose. But the task which he had undertaken was too difficult, delicate, and perilous, even for so wary and dexterous an agent. He had to manage two spirits equally proud, resentful, and ungovernable. At Essex House, he had to calm the rage of a young hero incensed by multiplied wrongs and humiliations, and then to pass to Whitehall for the purpose of soothing the peevishness of a sovereign, whose temper, never very gentle, had been rendered morbidly irritable by age, by declining health, and by the long habit of listening to flattery and exacting implicit obedience. It is hard to serve two masters. Situated as Bacon was, it was scarcely possible for him to shape his course so as not to give one or both of his employers reason to complain. For a time he acted as fairly as, in circumstances so embarrassing, could reasonably be expected. At length he found that, while he was trying to prop the fortunes of another, he was in danger of shaking his own. He had disobliged both the parties whom he wished to reconcile. Essex thought him wanting in zeal as a friend: Elizabeth thought him wanting in duty as a subject. The Earl looked on him as a spy of the Queen; the Queen as a creature of the Earl. The reconciliation which he had laboured to effect appeared utterly hopeless. A thousand signs, legible to eyes far less keen than his, announced that the fall of his patron was at hand. He shaped his course accordingly. When Essex was

Digitized by Google

brought before the council to answer for his conduct in Ireland, Bacon, after a faint attempt to excuse himself from taking part against his friend, submitted himself to the Queen's pleasure, and appeared at the bar in support of the charges. But a darker scene was behind. The unhappy young nobleman, made reckless by despair, ventured on a rash and criminal enterprise, which rendered him liable to the highest penalties of the law. What course was Bacon to take? This was one of those conjunctures which show what men are. To a high-minded man, wealth, power, court-favor, even personal safety, would have appeared of no account, when opposed to friendship, gratitude, and honour. Such a man would have stood by the side of Essex at the trial, would have "spent all his power, might, authority, and amity" in soliciting a mitigation of the sentence, would have been a daily visitor at the cell, would have received the last injunctions and the last embrace on the scaffold, would have employed all the powers of his intellect to guard from insult the fame of his generous though erring friend. An ordinary man would neither have incurred the danger of succouring Essex, nor the disgrace of assailing him. Bacon did not even preserve neutrality. He appeared as counsel for the prosecution. In that situation he did not confine himself to what would have been amply sufficient to procure a verdict. He employed all his wit, his rhetoric, and his learning, not to insure a conviction, — for the circumstances were such that a conviction was inevitable, — but to deprive the unhappy prisoner of all those excuses which, though legally of no value, yet tended to diminish the moral guilt of the crime, and which, therefore, though they could not justify the peers in pronouncing an acquittal, might

Digitized by Google

incline the Queen to grant a pardon. The Earl urged as a palliation of his frantic acts that he was surrounded by powerful and inveterate enemies, that they had ruined his fortunes, that they sought his life, and that their persecutions had driven him to despair. This was true; and Bacon well knew it to be true. But he affected to treat it as an idle pretence. He compared Essex to Pisistratus who, by pretending to be in imminent danger of assassination, and by exhibiting self-inflicted wounds, succeeded in establishing tyranny at Athens. This was too much for the prisoner to bear. He interrupted his ungrateful friend by calling on him to quit the part of an advocate, to come forward as a witness, and to tell the Lords whether, in old times, he Francis Bacon, had not under his own hand, repeatedly asserted the truth of what he now represented as idle pretexts. It is painful to go on with this lamentable story. Bacon returned a shuffling answer to the Earl's question, and, as if the allusion to Pisistratus were not sufficiently offensive, made another allusion still more unjustifiable. He compared Essex to Henry Duke of Guise, and the rash attempt in the city to the day of the barricades at Paris. Why Bacon had recourse to such a topic it is difficult to say. It was quite unnecessary for the purpose of obtaining a verdict. It was certain to produce a strong impression on the mind of the haughty and jealous princess on whose pleasure the Earl's fate depended. The faintest allusion to the degrading tutelage in which the last Valois had been held by the House of Lorraine was sufficient to harden her heart against a man who in rank, in military reputation, in popularity among the citizens of the capital, bore some resemblance to the Captain of the League.

Digitized by Google

Essex was convicted. Bacon made no effort to save him, though the Queen's feelings were such that he might have pleaded his benefactor's cause, possibly with success, certainly without any serious danger to himself. The unhappy nobleman was executed. His fate excited strong, perhaps unreasonable feelings of compassion and indignation. The Queen was received by the citizens of London with gloomy looks and faint acclamations. She thought it expedient to publish a vindication of her late proceedings. The faithless friend who had assisted in taking the Earl's life was now employed to murder the Earl's fame. The Queen had seen some of Bacon's writings, and had been pleased with them. He was accordingly selected to write "A Declaration of the Practices and Treasons attempted and committed by Robert Earl of Essex," which was printed by authority. In the succeeding reign, Bacon had not a word to say in defence of this performance, a performance abounding in expressions which no generous enemy would have employed respecting a man who had so dearly expiated his offences. His only excuse was, that he wrote it by command, that he considered himself as a mere secretary, that he had particular instructions as to the way in which he was to treat every part of the subject, and that, in fact, he had furnished only the arrangement and the style.

We regret to say that the whole conduct of Bacon through the course of these transactions appears to Mr. Montagu not merely excusable, but deserving of high admiration. The integrity and benevolence of this gentleman are so well known that our readers will probably be at a loss to conceive by what steps he can have arrived at so extraordinary a conclusion: and we are half afraid that they will suspect us of practising

Digitized by Google

some artifice upon them when we report the principal arguments which he employs.

In order to get rid of the charge of ingratitude, Mr. Montagu attempts to show that Bacon lay under greater obligations to the Queen than to Essex. What these obligations were it is not easy to discover. The situation of Queen's Counsel, and a remote reversion, were surely favours very far below Bacon's personal and hereditary claims. They were favours which had not cost the Queen a groat, nor had they put a groat into Bacon's purse. It was necessary to rest Elizabeth's claims to gratitude on some other ground; and this Mr. Montagu felt. "What perhaps was her greatest kindness," says he, "instead of having hastily advanced Bacon, she had, with a continuance of her friendship, made him bear the yoke in his youth. Such were his obligations to Elizabeth." Such indeed they were. Being the son of one of her oldest and most faithful ministers, being himself the ablest and most accomplished young man of his time, he had been condemned by her to drudgery, to obscurity, to poverty. She had depreciated his acquirements. She had checked him in the most imperious manner, when in Parliament he ventured to act an independent part. She had refused to him the professional advancement to which he had a just claim. To her it was owing that, while younger men, not superior to him in extraction, and far inferior to him in every kind of personal merit, were filling the highest offices of the state, adding manor to manor, rearing palace after palace, he was lying at a spunging-house for a debt of three hundred pounds. Assuredly if Bacon owed gratitude to Elizabeth, he owed none to Essex. If the Queen really was his best friend, the Earl was his worst ene-

Digitized by Google

my. We wonder that Mr. Montagu did not press this argument a little further. He might have maintained that Bacon was excusable in revenging himself on a man who had attempted to rescue his youth from the salutary yoke imposed on it by the Queen, who had wished to advance him hastily, who, not content with attempting to inflict the Attorney-Generalship upon him, had been so cruel as to present him with a landed estate.

Again, we can hardly think Mr. Montagu serious when he tells us that Bacon was bound for the sake of the public not to destroy his own hopes of advancement, and that he took part against Essex from a wish to obtain power which might enable him to be useful to his country. We really do not know how to refute such arguments except by stating them. Nothing is impossible which does not involve a contradiction. It is barely possible that Bacon's motives for acting as he did on this occasion may have been gratitude to the Queen for keeping him poor, and a desire to benefit his fellow-creatures in some high situation. And there is a possibility that Bonner may have been a good Protestant who, being convinced that the blood of martyrs is the seed of the Church, heroically went through all the drudgery and infamy of persecution, in order that he might inspire the English people with an intense and lasting hatred of Popery. There is a possibility that Jeffreys may have been an ardent lover of liberty, and that he may have beheaded Algernon Sydney, and burned Elizabeth Gaunt, only in order to produce a reaction which might lead to the limitation of the prerogative. There is a possibility that Thurtell may have killed Weare only in order to give the youth of England an impressive warning against gaming and

Digitized by Google

bad company. There is a possibility that Fauntleroy may have forged powers of attorney, only in order that his fate might turn the attention of the public to the defects of the penal law. These things, we say, are possible. But they are so extravagantly improbable that a man who should act on such suppositions would be fit only for Saint Luke's. And we do not see why suppositions on which no rational man would act in ordinary life should be admitted into history.

Mr. Montagu's notion that Bacon desired power only in order to do good to mankind appears somewhat strange to us, when we consider how Bacon afterwards used power, and how he lost it. Surely the service which he rendered to mankind by taking Lady Wharton's broad pieces and Sir John Kennedy's cabinet was not of such vast importance as to sanctify all the means which might conduce to that end. If the case were fairly stated, it would, we much fear, stand thus: Bacon was a servile advocate, that he might be a corrupt judge.

Mr. Montagu maintains that none but the ignorant and unreflecting can think Bacon censurable for any thing that he did as counsel for the Crown, and that no advocate can justifiably use any discretion as to the party for whom he appears. We will not at present inquire whether the doctrine which is held on this subject by English lawyers be or be not agreeable to reason and morality; whether it be right that a man should, with a wig on his head, and a band round his neck, do for a guinea what, without those appendages, he would think it wicked and infamous to do for an empire; whether it be right that, not merely believing but knowing a statement to be true, he should do all that can be done by sophistry, by rhetoric, by sol-

Digitized by Google

emn asseveration, by indignant exclamation, by gesture, by play of features, by terrifying one honest witness, by perplexing another, to cause a jury to think that statement false. It is not necessary on the present occasion to decide these questions. The professional rules, be they good or bad, are rules to which many wise and virtuous men have conformed, and are daily conforming. If, therefore, Bacon did no more than these rules required of him, we shall readily admit that he was blameless, or, at least, excusable. But we conceive that his conduct was not justifiable according to any professional rules that now exist, or that ever existed in England. It has always been held that, in criminal cases in which the prisoner was denied the help of counsel, and, above all, in capital cases, advocates were both entitled and bound to exercise a discretion. It is true that, after the Revolution, when the Parliament began to make inquisition for the innocent blood which had been shed by the last Stuarts, a feeble attempt was made to defend the lawyers who had been accomplices in the murder of Sir Thomas Armstrong, on the ground that they had only acted professionally. The wretched sophism was silenced by the execrations of the House of Commons. "Things will never be well done," said Mr. Foley, "till some of that profession be made examples." "We have a new sort of monsters in the world," said the younger Hampden, "haranguing a man to death. These I call bloodhounds. Sawyer is very criminal and guilty of this murder." "I speak to discharge my conscience," said Mr. Garroway. "I will not have the blood of this man at my door. Sawyer demanded judgment against him and execution. I believe him guilty of the death

Digitized by Google

of this man. Do what you will with him." "If the profession of the law," said the elder Hampden, "gives a man authority to murder at this rate, it is the interest of all men to rise and exterminate that profession." Nor was this language held only by unlearned country gentlemen. Sir William Williams, one of the ablest and most unscrupulous lawyers of the age, took the same view of the case. He had not hesitated, he said, to take part in the prosecution of the Bishops, because they were allowed counsel. But he maintained that, where the prisoner was not allowed counsel, the Counsel for the Crown was bound to exercise a discretion, and that every lawyer who neglected this distinction was a betrayer of the law. But it is unnecessary to cite authority. It is known to every body who has ever looked into a court of quarter-sessions that lawyers do exercise a discretion in criminal cases; and it is plain to every man of common sense that, if they did not exercise such a discretion, they would be a more hateful body of men than those bravoes who used to hire out their stilettoes in Italy.

Bacon appeared against a man who was indeed guilty of a great offence, but who had been his benefactor and friend. He did more than this. Nay, he did more than a person who had never seen Essex would have been justified in doing. He employed all the art of an advocate in order to make the prisoner's conduct appear more inexcusable and more dangerous to the state than it really had been. All that professional duty could, in any case, have required of him would have been to conduct the cause so as to insure a conviction. But from the nature of the circumstances there could not be the smallest doubt that the Earl would be found guilty. The character of the

Digitized by Google

crime was unequivocal. It had been committed recently, in broad daylight, in the streets of the capital, in the presence of thousands. If ever there was an occasion on which an advocate had no temptation to resort to extraneous topics, for the purpose of blinding the judgment and inflaming the passions of a tribunal, this was that occasion. Why then resort to arguments which, while they could add nothing to the strength of the case, considered in a legal point of view, tended to aggravate the moral guilt of the fatal enterprise, and to excite fear and resentment in that quarter from which alone the Earl could now expect mercy? Why remind the audience of the arts of the ancient tyrants? Why deny, what every body knew to be the truth, that a powerful faction at court had long sought to effect the ruin of the prisoner? Why, above all, institute a parallel between the unhappy culprit and the most wicked and most successful rebel of the age? Was it absolutely impossible to do all that professional duty required without reminding a jealous sovereign of the League, of the barricades, and of all the humiliations which a too powerful subject had heaped on Henry the Third?

But if we admit the plea which Mr. Montagu urges in defence of what Bacon did as an advocate, what shall we say of the "Declaration of the Treasons of Robert Earl of Essex?" Here at least there was no pretence of professional obligation. Even those who may think it the duty of a lawyer to hang, draw, and quarter his benefactors, for a proper consideration, will hardly say that it is his duty to write abusive pamphlets against them, after they are in their graves. Bacon excused himself by saying that he was not answerable for the matter of the book, and that he furnished only

Digitized by Google

the language. But why did he endow such purposes with words? Could no hack writer, without virtue or shame, be found to exaggerate the errors, already so dearly expiated, of a gentle and noble spirit? Every age produces those links between the man and the baboon. Every age is fertile of Old-mixons, of Kenricks, and of Antony Pasquins. But was it for Bacon so to prostitute his intellect? Could he not feel that, while he rounded and pointed some period dictated by the envy of Cecil, or gave a plausible form to some slander invented by the dastardly malignity of Cobham, he was not sinning merely against his friend's honour and his own? Could he not feel that letters, eloquence, philosophy, were all degraded in his degradation?

The real explanation of all this is perfectly obvious; and nothing but a partiality amounting to a ruling passion could cause any body to miss it. The moral qualities of Bacon were not of a high order. We do not say that he was a bad man. He was not inhuman or tyrannical. He bore with meekness his high civil honours, and the far higher honours gained by his intellect. He was very seldom, if ever, provoked into treating any person with malignity and insolence. No man more readily held up the left cheek to those who had smitten the right. No man was more expert at the soft answer which turneth away wrath. He was never charged, by any accuser entitled to the smallest credit, with licentious habits. His even temper, his flowing courtesy, the general respectability of his demeanour, made a favourable impression on those who saw him in situations which do not severely try the principles. His faults were — we write it with pain — coldness of heart, and meanness of spirit. He seems to have been incapable of feeling strong affection, of

Digitized by Google

facing great dangers, of making great sacrifices. His desires were set on things below. Wealth, precedence, titles, patronage, the mace, the seals, the coronet, large houses, fair gardens, rich manors, massive services of plate, gay hangings, curious cabinets, had as great attractions for him as for any of the courtiers who dropped on their knees in the dirt when Elizabeth passed by, and then hastened home to write to the King of Scots that her Grace seemed to be breaking fast. For these objects he had stooped to every thing and endured every thing. For these he had sued in the humblest manner, and, when unjustly and ungraciously repulsed, had thanked those who had repulsed him, and had begun to sue again. For these objects, as soon as he found that the smallest show of independence in Parliament was offensive to the Queen, he had abased himself to the dust before her, and implored forgiveness in terms better suited to a convicted thief than to a knight of the shire. For these he joined, and for these he forsook, Lord Essex. He continued to plead his patron's cause with the Queen as long as he thought that by pleading that cause he might serve himself. Nay, he went further; for his feelings, though not warm, were kind: he pleaded that cause as long as he thought that he could plead it without injury to himself. But when it became evident that Essex was going headlong to his ruin, Bacon began to tremble for his own fortunes. What he had to fear would not indeed have been very alarming to a man of lofty character. It was not death. It was not imprisonment. It was the loss of court favour. It was the being left behind by others in the career of ambition. It was the having leisure to finish the *Instauratio Magna*. The Queen looked coldly on him. The courtiers began to consider him as a marked

Digitized by Google

man. He determined to change his line of conduct, and to proceed in a new course with so much vigour as to make up for lost time. When once he had determined to act against his friend, knowing himself to be suspected, he acted with more zeal than would have been necessary or justifiable if he had been employed against a stranger. He exerted his professional talents to shed the Earl's blood, and his literary talents to blacken the Earl's memory.

It is certain that his conduct excited at the time great and general disapprobation. While Elizabeth lived, indeed, this disapprobation, though deeply felt, was not loudly expressed. But a great change was at hand. The health of the Queen had long been decaying; and the operation of age and disease was now assisted by acute mental suffering. The pitiable melancholy of her last days has generally been ascribed to her fond regret for Essex. But we are disposed to attribute her dejection partly to physical causes, and partly to the conduct of her courtiers and ministers. They did all in their power to conceal from her the intrigues which they were carrying on at the Court of Scotland. But her keen sagacity was not to be so deceived. She did not know the whole. But she knew that she was surrounded by men who were impatient for that new world which was to begin at her death, who had never been attached to her by affection, and who were now but very slightly attached to her by interest. Prostration and flattery could not conceal from her the cruel truth, that those whom she had trusted and promoted had never loved her, and were fast ceasing to fear her. Unable to avenge herself, and too proud to complain, she suffered sorrow and resentment to prey on her heart, till, after a

Digitized by Google

long career of power, prosperity, and glory, she died sick and weary of the world.

James mounted the throne: and Bacon employed all his address to obtain for himself a share of the favour of his new master. This was no difficult task. The faults of James, both as a man and as a prince, were numerous; but insensibility to the claims of genius and learning was not among them. He was indeed made up of two men, a witty, well-read scholar, who wrote, disputed and harangued, and a nervous, drivelling idiot, who acted. If he had been a Canon of Christ Church, or a Prebendary of Westminster, it is not improbable that he would have left a highly respectable name to posterity; that he would have distinguished himself among the translators of the Bible, and among the Divines who attended the Synod of Dort; and that he would have been regarded by the literary world as no contemptible rival of Vossius and Casaubon. But fortune placed him in a situation in which his weaknesses covered him with disgrace, and in which his accomplishments brought him no honour. In a college, much eccentricity and childishness would have been readily pardoned in so learned a man. But all that learning could do for him on the throne was to make people think him a pedant as well as a fool.

Bacon was favourably received at Court; and soon found that his chance of promotion was not diminished by the death of the Queen. He was solicitous to be knighted, for two reasons which are somewhat amusing. The King had already dubbed half London, and Bacon found himself the only untitled person in his mess at Gray's Inn. This was not very agreeable to him. He had also, to quote his own words, "found an Alderman's daughter, a handsome maiden, to his

Digitized by Google

liking." On both these grounds, he begged his cousin Robert Cecil, "if it might please his good Lordship," to use his interest in his behalf. The application was successful. Bacon was one of three hundred gentlemen who, on the coronation-day, received the honour, if it is to be so called, of knighthood. The handsome maiden, a daughter of Alderman Barnham, soon after consented to become Sir Francis's lady.

The death of Elizabeth, though on the whole it improved Bacon's prospects, was in one respect an unfortunate event for him. The new King had always felt kindly towards Lord Essex, and, as soon as he came to the throne, began to show favour to the house of Devereux, and to those who had stood by that house in its adversity. Everybody was now at liberty to speak out respecting those lamentable events in which Bacon had borne so large a share. Elizabeth was scarcely cold when the public feeling began to manifest itself by marks of respect towards Lord Southampton. That accomplished nobleman, who will be remembered to the latest ages as the generous and discerning patron of Shakspeare, was held in honour by his contemporaries chiefly on account of the devoted affection which he had borne to Essex. He had been tried and convicted together with his friend; but the Queen had spared his life, and, at the time of her death, he was still a prisoner. A crowd of visitors hastened to the Tower to congratulate him on his approaching deliverance. With that crowd Bacon could not venture to mingle. The multitude loudly condemned him; and his conscience told him that the multitude had but too much reason. He excused himself to Southampton by letter, in terms which, if he had, as Mr. Montagu conceives, done only what as a subject and an advocate he was bound to do,

Digitized by Google

must be considered as shamefully servile. He owns his fear that his attendance would give offence, and that his professions of regard would obtain no credit. "Yet," says he, "it is as true as a thing that God knoweth, that this great change hath wrought in me no other change towards your Lordship than this, that I may safely be that to you now which I was truly before."

How Southampton received these apologies we are not informed. But it is certain that the general opinion was pronounced against Bacon in a manner not to be misunderstood. Soon after his marriage he put forth a defence of his conduct, in the form of a letter to the Earl of Devon. This tract seems to us to prove only the exceeding badness of a cause for which such talents could do so little.

It is not probable that Bacon's Defence had much effect on his contemporaries. But the unfavourable impression which his conduct had made appears to have been gradually effaced. Indeed it must be some very peculiar cause that can make a man like him long unpopular. His talents secured him from contempt, his temper and his manners from hatred. There is scarcely any story so black that it may not be got over by a man of great abilities, whose abilities are united with caution, good-humour, patience, and affability, who pays daily sacrifice to Nemesis, who is a delightful companion, a serviceable though not an ardent friend, and a dangerous yet a placable enemy. Waller in the next generation was an eminent instance of this. Indeed Waller had much more than may at first sight appear in common with Bacon. To the higher intellectual qualities of the great English philosopher, to the genius which has made an immortal epoch in the history of

Digitized by Google

science, Waller had indeed no pretensions. But the mind of Waller, as far as it extended, coincided with that of Bacon, and might, so to speak, have been cut out of that of Bacon. In the qualities which make a man an object of interest and veneration to posterity, they cannot be compared together. But in the qualities by which chiefly a man is known to his contemporaries there was a striking similarity between them. Considered as men of the world, as courtiers, as politicians, as associates, as allies, as enemies, they had nearly the same merits, and the same defects. They were not malignant. They were not tyrannical. But they wanted warmth of affection and elevation of sentiment. There were many things which they loved better than virtue, and which they feared more than guilt. Yet, even after they had stooped to acts of which it is impossible to read the account in the most partial narratives without strong disapprobation and contempt, the public still continued to regard them with a feeling not easily to be distinguished from esteem. The hyperbole of Juliet seemed to be verified with respect to them. "Upon their brows shame was ashamed to sit." Everybody seemed as desirous to throw a veil over their misconduct as if it had been his own. Clarendon, who felt, and who had reason to feel, strong personal dislike towards Waller, speaks of him thus: "There needs no more to be said to extol the excellence and power of his wit and pleasantness of his conversation, than that it was of magnitude enough to cover a world of very great faults, that is, so to cover them that they were not taken notice of to his reproach, viz. a narrowness in his nature to the lowest degree, an abjectness and want of courage to support him in any virtuous undertaking, an insinuation and servile flattery to the height

Digitized by Google

the vainest and most imperious nature could be contented with. . . . It had power to reconcile him to those whom he had most offended and provoked, and continued to his age with that rare felicity, that his company was acceptable where his spirit was odious, and he was at least pitied where he was most detested." Much of this, with some softening, might, we fear, be applied to Bacon. The influence of Waller's talents, manners, and accomplishments, died with him; and the world has pronounced an unbiassed sentence on his character. A few flowing lines are not bribe sufficient to pervert the judgment of posterity. But the influence of Bacon is felt and will long be felt over the whole civilised world. Leniently as he was treated by his contemporaries, posterity has treated him more leniently still. Turn where we may, the trophies of that mighty intellect are full in view. We are judging Manlius in sight of the Capitol.

Under the reign of James, Bacon grew rapidly in fortune and favour. In 1604 he was appointed King's Counsel, with a fee of forty pounds a year; and a pension of sixty pounds a year was settled upon him. In 1607 he became Solicitor-General, in 1612 Attorney-General. He continued to distinguish himself in Parliament, particularly by his exertions in favour of one excellent measure on which the King's heart was set, the union of England and Scotland. It was not difficult for such an intellect to discover many irresistible arguments in favour of such a scheme. He conducted the great case of the *Post Nati* in the Exchequer Chamber; and the decision of the judges, a decision the legality of which may be questioned, but the beneficial effect of which must be acknowledged, was in a great measure attributed to his dexterous management.

Digitized by Google

While actively engaged in the House of Commons and in the courts of law, he still found leisure for letters and philosophy. The noble treatise on the "Advancement of Learning," which at a later period was expanded into the *De Augmentis*, appeared in 1605. The "Wisdom of the Ancients," a work which, if it had proceeded from any other writer, would have been considered as a masterpiece of wit and learning, but which adds little to the fame of Bacon, was printed in 1609. In the mean time the *Novum Organum* was slowly proceeding. Several distinguished men of learning had been permitted to see sketches or detached portions of that extraordinary book; and, though they were not generally disposed to admit the soundness of the author's views, they spoke with the greatest admiration of his genius. Sir Thomas Bodley, the founder of one of the most magnificent of English libraries, was among those stubborn Conservatives who considered the hopes with which Bacon looked forward to the future destinies of the human race as utterly chimerical, and who regarded with distrust and aversion the innovating spirit of the new schismatics in philosophy. Yet even Bodley, after perusing the *Cogitata et Visa*, one of the most precious of those scattered leaves out of which the great oracular volume was afterwards made up, acknowledged that in "those very points, and in all proposals and plots in that book, Bacon showed himself a master-workman;" and that "it could not be gainsaid but all the treatise over did abound with choice conceits of the present state of learning, and with worthy contemplations of the means to procure it." In 1612, a new edition of the "Essays" appeared, with additions surpassing the original collection both in bulk and quality. Nor did

Digitized by Google

these pursuits distract Bacon's attention from a work the most arduous, the most glorious, and the most useful that even his mighty powers could have achieved, "the reducing and recompiling," to use his own phrase, "of the laws of England."

Unhappily he was at that very time employed in perverting those laws to the vilest purposes of tyranny. When Oliver St. John was brought before the Star Chamber for maintaining that the King had no right to levy Benevolences, and was for his manly and constitutional conduct sentenced to imprisonment during the royal pleasure and to a fine of five thousand pounds, Bacon appeared as counsel for the prosecution. About the same time he was deeply engaged in a still more disgraceful transaction. An aged clergyman, of the name of Peacham, was accused of treason on account of some passages of a sermon which was found in his study. The sermon, whether written by him or not, had never been preached. It did not appear that he had any intention of preaching it. The most servile lawyers of those servile times were forced to admit that there were great difficulties both as to the facts and as to the law. Bacon was employed to remove those difficulties. He was employed to settle the question of law by tampering with the judges, and the question of fact by torturing the prisoner.

Three judges of the Court of King's Bench were tractable. But Coke was made of different stuff. Pedant, bigot, and brute as he was, he had qualities which bore a strong, though a very disagreeable resemblance to some of the highest virtues which a public man can possess. He was an exception to a maxim which we believe to be generally true, that those who trample on the helpless are disposed to cringe to the powerful.

Digitized by Google

He behaved with gross rudeness to his juniors at the bar, and with execrable cruelty to prisoners on trial for their lives. But he stood up manfully against the King and the King's favourites. No man of that age appeared to so little advantage when he was opposed to an inferior, and was in the wrong. But, on the other hand, it is but fair to admit that no man of that age made so creditable a figure when he was opposed to a superior, and happened to be in the right. On such occasions, his half-suppressed insolence and his impracticable obstinacy had a respectable and interesting appearance, when compared with the abject servility of the bar and of the bench. On the present occasion he was stubborn and surly. He declared that it was a new and a highly improper practice in the judges to confer with a law-officer of the crown about capital cases which they were afterwards to try; and for some time he resolutely kept aloof. But Bacon was equally artful and persevering. "I am not wholly out of hope," said he in a letter to the King, "that my Lord Coke himself, when I have in some dark manner put him in doubt that he shall be left alone, will not be singular." After some time Bacon's dexterity was successful; and Coke, sullenly and reluctantly, followed the example of his brethren. But in order to convict Peacham it was necessary to find facts as well as law. Accordingly, this wretched old man was put to the rack, and, while undergoing the horrible infliction, was examined by Bacon, but in vain. No confession could be wrung out of him; and Bacon wrote to the King, complaining that Peacham had a dumb devil. At length the trial came on. A conviction was obtained; but the charges were so obviously futile, that the government could not, for very shame, carry the sentence into execution; and

Digitized by Google

Peacham was suffered to languish away the short remainder of his life in a prison.

All this frightful story Mr. Montagu relates fairly. He neither conceals nor distorts any material fact. But he can see nothing deserving of condemnation in Bacon's conduct. He tells us most truly that we ought not to try the men of one age by the standard of another; that Sir Matthew Hale is not to be pronounced a bad man because he left a woman to be executed for witchcraft; that posterity will not be justified in censuring judges of our time, for selling offices in their courts, according to the established practice, bad as that practice was; and that Bacon is entitled to similar indulgence. "To persecute the lover of truth," says Mr. Montagu, "for opposing established customs, and to censure him in after ages for not having been more strenuous in opposition, are errors which will never cease until the pleasure of self-elevation from the depression of superiority is no more."

We have no dispute with Mr. Montagu about the general proposition. We assent to every word of it. But does it apply to the present case? Is it true that in the time of James the First it was the established practice for the law-officers of the Crown, to hold private consultations with the judges, touching capital cases which those judges were afterwards to try? Certainly not. In the very page in which Mr. Montagu asserts that "the influencing a judge out of court seems at that period scarcely to have been considered as improper," he gives the very words of Sir Edward Coke on the subject. "I will not thus declare what may be my judgment by these auricular confessions of *new* and pernicious tendency, and *not according to the customs of the realm.*" Is it possible to imagine that Coke, who

Digitized by Google

had himself been Attorney-General during thirteen years, who had conducted a far greater number of important state-prosecutions than any other lawyer named in English history, and who had passed with scarcely any interval from the Attorney-Generalship to the first seat in the first criminal court in the realm, could have been startled at an invitation to confer with the crown-lawyers, and could have pronounced the practice new, if it had really been an established usage? We well know that, where property only was at stake, it was then a common, though a most culpable practice, in the judges, to listen to private solicitations. But the practice of tampering with judges in order to procure capital convictions we believe to have been new, first, because Coke, who understood those matters better than any man of his time, asserted it to be new; and secondly, because neither Bacon nor Mr. Montagu has shown a single precedent.

How then stands the case? Even thus: Bacon was not conforming to an usage then generally admitted to be proper. He was not even the last lingering adherent of an old abuse. It would have been sufficiently disgraceful to such a man to be in this last situation. Yet this last situation would have been honourable compared with that in which he stood. He was guilty of attempting to introduce into the courts of law an odious abuse for which no precedent could be found. Intellectually, he was better fitted than any man that England has ever produced for the work of improving her institutions. But, unhappily, we see that he did not scruple to exert his great powers for the purpose of introducing into those institutions new corruptions of the foulest kind.

The same, or nearly the same, may be said of the

Digitized by Google

torturing of Peacham. If it be true that in the time of James the First the propriety of torturing prisoners was generally allowed, we should admit this as an excuse, though we should admit it less readily in the case of such a man as Bacon than in the case of an ordinary lawyer or politician. But the fact is, that the practice of torturing prisoners was then generally acknowledged by lawyers to be illegal, and was execrated by the public as barbarous. More than thirty years before Peacham's trial, that practice was so loudly condemned by the voice of the nation that Lord Burleigh found it necessary to publish an apology for having occasionally resorted to it. But though the dangers which then threatened the government were of a very different kind from those which were to be apprehended from any thing that Peacham could write, though the life of the Queen and the dearest interests of the state were in jeopardy, though the circumstances were such that all ordinary laws might seem to be superseded by that highest law, the public safety, the apology did not satisfy the country: and the Queen found it expedient to issue an order positively forbidding the torturing of state-prisoners on any pretence whatever. From that time, the practice of torturing, which had always been unpopular, which had always been illegal, had also been unusual. It is well known that in 1628, only fourteen years after the time when Bacon went to the Tower to listen to the yells of Peacham, the judges decided that Felton, a criminal who neither deserved nor was likely to obtain any extraordinary indulgence, could not lawfully be put to the question. We therefore say that Bacon stands in a very different situation from that in which Mr. Montagu tries to place him. Bacon was here distinctly behind his

Digitized by Google

age. He was one of the last of the tools of power who persisted in a practice the most barbarous and the most absurd that has ever disgraced jurisprudence, in a practice of which, in the preceding generation, Elizabeth and her ministers had been ashamed, in a practice which, a few years later, no sycophant in all the Inns of Court had the heart or the forehead to defend.[1]

Bacon far behind his age! Bacon far behind Sir Edward Coke! Bacon clinging to exploded abuses! Bacon withstanding the progress of improvement! Bacon struggling to push back the human mind! The words seem strange. They sound like a contradiction in terms. Yet the fact is even so: and the explanation may be readily found by any person who is not blinded by prejudice. Mr. Montagu cannot believe that so extraordinary a man as Bacon could be guilty of a bad action; as if history were not made up of the bad actions of extraordinary men, as if all the most noted destroyers and deceivers of our species, all the founders of arbitrary governments and false religions, had not been extraordinary men, as if nine tenths of the calamities which have befallen the human race had any other origin than the union of high intelligence with low desires.

Bacon knew this well. He has told us that there

[1] Since this Review was written, Mr. Jardine has published a very learned and ingenious Reading on the use of torture in England. It has not, however, been thought necessary to make any change in the observations on Peacham's case.

It is impossible to discuss within the limits of a note, the extensive question raised by Mr. Jardine. It is sufficient here to say that every argument by which he attempts to show that the use of the rack was anciently a lawful exertion of royal prerogative may be urged with equal force, nay with far greater force, to prove the lawfulness of benevolences, of ship-money, of Mompesson's patent, of Eliot's imprisonment, of every abuse, without exception, which is condemned by the Petition of Right and the Declaration of Right.

Digitized by Google

are persons "scientia tanquam angeli alati, cupiditatibus vero tanquam serpentes qui humi reptant;"[1] and it did not require his admirable sagacity and his extensive converse with mankind to make the discovery. Indeed, he had only to look within. The difference between the soaring angel and the creeping snake was but a type of the difference between Bacon the philosopher and Bacon the Attorney-General, Bacon seeking for truth, and Bacon seeking for the Seals. Those who survey only one half of his character may speak of him with unmixed admiration, or with unmixed contempt. But those only judge of him correctly who take in at one view Bacon in speculation and Bacon in action. They will have no difficulty in comprehending how one and the same man should have been far before his age and far behind it, in one line the boldest and most useful of innovators, in another line the most obstinate champion of the foulest abuses. In his library, all his rare powers were under the guidance of an honest ambition, of an enlarged philanthropy, of a sincere love of truth. There, no temptation drew him away from the right course. Thomas Aquinas could pay no fees, Duns Scotus could confer no peerages. The Master of the Sentences had no rich reversions in his gift. Far different was the situation of the great philosopher when he came forth from his study and his laboratory to mingle with the crowd which filled the galleries of Whitehall. In all that crowd there was no man equally qualified to render great and lasting services to mankind. But in all that crowd there was not a heart more set on things which no man ought to suffer to be necessary to

[1] *De Augmentis*, Lib. v. Cap. 1.

Digitized by Google

his happiness, on things which can often be obtained only by the sacrifice of integrity and honour. To be the leader of the human race in the career of improvement, to found on the ruins of ancient intellectual dynasties a more prosperous and a more enduring empire, to be revered by the latest generations as the most illustrious among the benefactors of mankind, all this was within his reach. But all this availed him nothing while some quibbling special pleader was promoted before him to the bench, while some heavy country gentleman took precedence of him by virtue of a purchased coronet, while some pandar, happy in a fair wife, could obtain a more cordial salute from Buckingham, while some buffoon, versed in all the latest scandal of the court, could draw a louder laugh from James.

During a long course of years, Bacon's unworthy ambition was crowned with success. His sagacity early enabled him to perceive who was likely to become the most powerful man in the kingdom. He probably knew the King's mind before it was known to the King himself, and attached himself to Villiers, while the less discerning crowd of courtiers still continued to fawn on Somerset. The influence of the younger favourite became greater daily. The contest between the rivals might, however, have lasted long, but for that frightful crime which, in spite of all that could be effected by the research and ingenuity of historians, is still covered with so mysterious an obscurity. The descent of Somerset had been a gradual and almost imperceptible lapse. It now became a headlong fall; and Villiers, left without a competitor, rapidly rose to a height of power such as no subject since Wolsey had attained.

Digitized by Google

There were many points of resemblance between the two celebrated courtiers who, at different times, extended their patronage to Bacon. It is difficult to say whether Essex or Villiers was more eminently distinguished by those graces of person and manner which have always been rated in courts at much more than their real value. Both were constitutionally brave; and both, like most men who are constitutionally brave, were open and unreserved. Both were rash and headstrong. Both were destitute of the abilities and of the information which are necessary to statesmen. Yet both, trusting to the accomplishments which had made them conspicuous in tilt-yards and ball-rooms, aspired to rule the state. Both owed their elevation to the personal attachment of the sovereign; and in both cases this attachment was of so eccentric a kind, that it perplexed observers, that it still continues to perplex historians, and that it gave rise to much scandal which we are inclined to think unfounded. Each of them treated the sovereign whose favour he enjoyed with a rudeness which approached to insolence. This petulance ruined Essex, who had to deal with a spirit naturally as proud as his own, and accustomed, during near half a century, to the most respectful observance. But there was a wide difference between the haughty daughter of Henry and her successor. James was timid from the cradle. His nerves, naturally weak, had not been fortified by reflection or by habit. His life, till he came to England, had been a series of mortifications and humiliations. With all his high notions of the origin and extent of his prerogatives, he was never his own master for a day. In spite of his kingly title, in spite of his despotic theories, he was to the last a slave at heart. Villiers treated him like

Digitized by Google

one; and this course, though adopted, we believe, merely from temper, succeeded as well as if it had been a system of policy formed after mature deliberation.

In generosity, in sensibility, in capacity for friendship, Essex far surpassed Buckingham. Indeed, Buckingham can scarcely be said to have had any friend, with the exception of the two princes over whom successively he exercised so wonderful an influence. Essex was to the last adored by the people. Buckingham was always a most unpopular man, except perhaps for a very short time after his return from the childish visit to Spain. Essex fell a victim to the rigour of the government amidst the lamentations of the people. Buckingham, execrated by the people, and solemnly declared a public enemy by the representatives of the people, fell by the hand of one of the people, and was lamented by none but his master.

The way in which the two favourites acted towards Bacon was highly characteristic, and may serve to illustrate the old and true saying, that a man is generally more inclined to feel kindly towards one on whom he has conferred favours than towards one from whom he has received them. Essex loaded Bacon with benefits, and never thought that he had done enough. It seems never to have crossed the mind of the powerful and wealthy noble that the poor barrister whom he treated with such munificent kindness was not his equal. It was, we have no doubt, with perfect sincerity that the Earl declared that he would willingly give his sister or daughter in marriage to his friend. He was in general more than sufficiently sensible of his own merits; but he did not seem to know that he had ever deserved well of Bacon. On that cruel day when they saw each other for the last time at the bar of the Lords, Essex

Digitized by Google

taxed his perfidious friend with unkindness and insincerity, but never with ingratitude. Even in such a moment, more bitter than the bitterness of death, that noble heart was too great to vent itself in such a reproach.

Villiers, on the other hand, owed much to Bacon. When their acquaintance began, Sir Francis was a man of mature age, of high station, and of established fame as a politician, an advocate, and a writer. Villiers was little more than a boy, a younger son of a house then of no great note. He was but just entering on the career of court favour; and none but the most discerning observers could as yet perceive that he was likely to distance all his competitors. The countenance and advice of a man so highly distinguished as the Attorney-General must have been an object of the highest importance to the young adventurer. But though Villiers was the obliged party, he was far less warmly attached to Bacon, and far less delicate in his conduct towards Bacon, than Essex had been.

To do the new favourite justice, he early exerted his influence in behalf of his illustrious friend. In 1616, Sir Francis was sworn of the Privy Council, and in March, 1617, on the retirement of Lord Brackley, was appointed Keeper of the Great Seal.

On the seventh of May, the first day of term, he rode in state to Westminster Hall, with the Lord Treasurer on his right hand, the Lord Privy Seal on his left, a long procession of students and ushers before him, and a crowd of peers, privy-councillors, and judges following in his train. Having entered his court, he addressed the splendid auditory in a grave and dignified speech, which proves how well he understood those judicial duties which he afterwards performed so ill.

Digitized by Google

Even at that moment, the proudest moment of his life in the estimation of the vulgar, and, it may be, even in his own, he cast back a look of lingering affection towards those noble pursuits from which, as it seemed, he was about to be estranged. "The depth of the three long vacations," said he, "I would reserve in some measure free from business of estate, and for studies, arts, and sciences, to which of my own nature I am most inclined."

The years during which Bacon held the Great Seal were among the darkest and most shameful in English history. Every thing at home and abroad was mismanaged. First came the execution of Raleigh, an act which, if done in a proper manner, might have been defensible, but which, under all the circumstances, must be considered as a dastardly murder. Worse was behind, the war of Bohemia, the successes of Tilly and Spinola, the Palatinate conquered, the King's son-in-law an exile, the house of Austria dominant on the Continent, the Protestant religion and the liberties of the Germanic body trodden under foot. Meanwhile, the wavering and cowardly policy of England furnished matter of ridicule to all the nations of Europe. The love of peace which James professed would, even when indulged to an impolitic excess, have been respectable, if it had proceeded from tenderness for his people. But the truth is that, while he had nothing to spare for the defence of the natural allies of England, he resorted without scruple to the most illegal and oppressive devices, for the purpose of enabling Buckingham and Buckingham's relations to outshine the ancient aristocracy of the realm. Benevolences were exacted. Patents of monopoly were multiplied. All the resources which could have been employed to replenish a beggared

Digitized by Google

Exchequer, at the close of a ruinous war, were put in motion during this season of ignominious peace.

The vices of the administration must be chiefly ascribed to the weakness of the King and to the levity and violence of the favourite. But it is impossible to acquit the Lord Keeper of all share in the guilt. For those odious patents, in particular, which passed the Great Seal while it was in his charge, he must be held answerable. In the speech which he made on first taking his seat in his court, he had pledged himself to discharge this important part of his functions with the greatest caution and impartiality. He had declared that he "would walk in the light," "that men should see that no particular turn or end led him, but a general rule." Mr. Montagu would have us believe that Bacon acted up to these professions, and says that "the power of the favourite did not deter the Lord Keeper from staying grants and patents when his public duty demanded this interposition." Does Mr. Montagu consider patents of Monopoly as good things? Or does he mean to say that Bacon staid every patent of monopoly that came before him? Of all patents in our history, the most disgraceful was that which was granted to Sir Giles Mompesson, supposed to be the original of Massinger's Overreach, and to Sir Francis Michell, from whom Justice Greedy is supposed to have been drawn, for the exclusive manufacturing of gold and silver lace. The effect of this monopoly was of course that the metal employed in the manufacture was adulterated to the great loss of the public. But this was a trifle. The patentees were armed with powers as great as have ever been given to farmers of the revenue in the worst governed countries. They were authorised to search houses and to arrest interlopers; and these formidable

Digitized by Google

powers were used for purposes viler than even those for which they were given, for the wreaking of old grudges, and for the corrupting of female chastity. Was not this a case in which public duty demanded the interposition of the Lord Keeper? And did the Lord Keeper interpose? He did. He wrote to inform the King, that he "had considered of the fitness and conveniency of the gold and silver thread business," "that it was convenient that it should be settled," that he "did conceive apparent likelihood that it would redound much to his Majesty's profit," that, therefore, "it were good it were settled with all convenient speed." The meaning of all this was, that certain of the house of Villiers were to go shares with Overreach and Greedy in the plunder of the public. This was the way in which, when the favourite pressed for patents, lucrative to his relations and to his creatures, ruinous and vexatious to the body of the people, the chief guardian of the laws interposed. Having assisted the patentees to obtain this monopoly, Bacon assisted them also in the steps which they took for the purpose of guarding it. He committed several people to close confinement for disobeying his tyrannical edict. It is needless to say more. Our readers are now able to judge whether, in the matter of patents, Bacon acted conformably to his professions, or deserved the praise which his biographer has bestowed on him.

In his judicial capacity his conduct was not less reprehensible. He suffered Buckingham to dictate many of his decisions. Bacon knew as well as any man that a judge who listens to private solicitations is a disgrace to his post. He had himself, before he was raised to the woolsack, represented this strongly to Villiers, then just entering on his career. "By no

Digitized by Google

means," said Sir Francis, in a letter of advice addressed to the young courtier, "by no means be you persuaded to interpose yourself, either by word or letter, in any cause depending in any court of justice, nor suffer any great man to do it where you can hinder it. If it should prevail, it perverts justice; but, if the judge be so just and of such courage as he ought to be, as not to be inclined thereby, yet it always leaves a taint of suspicion behind it." Yet he had not been Lord Keeper a month when Buckingham began to interfere in Chancery suits; and Buckingham's interference was, as might have been expected, successful.

Mr. Montagu's reflections on the excellent passage which we have quoted above are exceedingly amusing. "No man," says he, "more deeply felt the evils which then existed of the interference of the Crown and of statesmen to influence judges. How beautifully did he admonish Buckingham, regardless as he proved of all admonition!" We should be glad to know how it can be expected that admonition will be regarded by him who receives it, when it is altogether neglected by him who gives it. We do not defend Buckingham: but what was his guilt to Bacon's? Buckingham was young, ignorant, thoughtless, dizzy with the rapidity of his ascent and the height of his position. That he should be eager to serve his relations, his flatterers, his mistresses, that he should not fully apprehend the immense importance of a pure administration of justice, that he should think more about those who were bound to him by private ties than about the public interest, all this was perfectly natural, and not altogether unpardonable. Those who intrust a petulant, hot-blooded, ill-informed lad with power, are more to blame than he for the mischief which he may do with

Digitized by Google

it. How could it be expected of a lively page, raised by a wild freak of fortune to the first influence in the empire, that he should have bestowed any serious thought on the principles which ought to guide judicial decisions? Bacon was the ablest public man then living in Europe. He was near sixty years old. He had thought much, and to good purpose, on the general principles of law. He had for many years borne a part daily in the administration of justice. It was impossible that a man with a tithe of his sagacity and experience should not have known that a judge who suffers friends or patrons to dictate his decrees violates the plainest rules of duty. In fact, as we have seen, he knew this well: he expressed it admirably. Neither on this occasion nor on any other could his bad actions be attributed to any defect of the head. They sprang from quite a different cause.

A man who stooped to render such services to others was not likely to be scrupulous as to the means by which he enriched himself. He and his dependents accepted large presents from persons who were engaged in Chancery suits. The amount of the plunder which he collected in this way it is impossible to estimate. There can be no doubt that he received very much more than was proved on his trial, though, it may be, less than was suspected by the public. His enemies stated his illicit gains at a hundred thousand pounds. But this was probably an exaggeration.

It was long before the day of reckoning arrived. During the interval between the second and third Parliaments of James, the nation was absolutely governed by the Crown. The prospects of the Lord Keeper were bright and serene. His great place rendered the

Digitized by Google

splendour of his talents even more conspicuous, and gave an additional charm to the serenity of his temper, the courtesy of his manners, and the eloquence of his conversation. The pillaged suitor might mutter. The austere Puritan patriot might, in his retreat, grieve that one on whom God had bestowed without measure all the abilities which qualify men to take the lead in great reforms should be found among the adherents of the worst abuses. But the murmurs of the suitor and the lamentations of the patriot had scarcely any avenue to the ears of the powerful. The King, and the minister who was the King's master, smiled on their illustrious flatterer. The whole crowd of courtiers and nobles sought his favour with emulous eagerness. Men of wit and learning hailed with delight the elevation of one who had so signally shown that a man of profound learning and of brilliant wit might understand, far better than any plodding dunce, the art of thriving in the world.

Once, and but once, this course of prosperity was for a moment interrupted. It should seem that even Bacon's brain was not strong enough to bear without some discomposure the inebriating effect of so much good fortune. For some time after his elevation, he showed himself a little wanting in that wariness and self-command to which, more than even to his transcendent talents, his elevation was to be ascribed. He was by no means a good hater. The temperature of his revenge, like that of his gratitude, was scarcely ever more than lukewarm. But there was one person whom he had long regarded with an animosity which, though studiously suppressed, was perhaps the stronger for the suppression. The insults and injuries which, when a young man struggling into note and professional prac-

Digitized by Google

tice, he had received from Sir Edward Coke, were such as might move the most placable nature to resentment. About the time at which Bacon received the Seals, Coke had, on account of his contumacious resistance to the royal pleasure, been deprived of his seat in the Court of King's Bench, and had ever since languished in retirement. But Coke's opposition to the Court, we fear, was the effect not of good principles, but of a bad temper. Perverse and testy as he was, he wanted true fortitude and dignity of character. His obstinacy, unsupported by virtuous motives, was not proof against disgrace. He solicited a reconciliation with the favourite, and his solicitations were successful. Sir John Villiers, the brother of Buckingham, was looking out for a rich wife. Coke had a large fortune and an unmarried daughter. A bargain was struck. But Lady Coke, the lady whom twenty years before Essex had wooed on behalf of Bacon, would not hear of the match. A violent and scandalous family quarrel followed. The mother carried the girl away by stealth. The father pursued them and regained possession of his daughter by force. The King was then in Scotland, and Buckingham had attended him thither. Bacon was, during their absence, at the head of affairs in England. He felt towards Coke as much malevolence as it was in his nature to feel towards any body. His wisdom had been laid to sleep by prosperity. In an evil hour he determined to interfere in the disputes which agitated his enemy's household. He declared for the wife, countenanced the Attorney-General in filing an information in the Star Chamber against the husband, and wrote letters to the King and the favourite against the proposed marriage. The strong language which he used in those letters shows that, saga-

Digitized by Google

cious as he was, he did not quite know his place, and that he was not fully acquainted with the extent either of Buckingham's power, or of the change which the possession of that power had produced in Buckingham's character. He soon had a lesson which he never forgot. The favourite received the news of the Lord Keeper's interference with feelings of the most violent resentment, and made the King even more angry than himself. Bacon's eyes were at once opened to his error, and to all its possible consequences. He had been elated, if not intoxicated, by greatness. The shock sobered him in an instant. He was all himself again. He apologized submissively for his interference. He directed the Attorney-General to stop the proceedings against Coke. He sent to tell Lady Coke that he could do nothing for her. He announced to both the families that he was desirous to promote the connection. Having given these proofs of contrition, he ventured to present himself before Buckingham. But the young upstart did not think that he had yet sufficiently humbled an old man who had been his friend and his benefactor, who was the highest civil functionary in the realm, and the most eminent man of letters in the world. It is said that on two successive days Bacon repaired to Buckingham's house, that on two successive days he was suffered to remain in an antechamber among foot-boys, seated on an old wooden box, with the Great Seal of England at his side, and that when at length he was admitted, he flung himself on the floor, kissed the favourite's feet, and vowed never to rise till he was forgiven. Sir Anthony Weldon, on whose authority this story rests, is likely enough to have exaggerated the meanness of Bacon and the insolence of Buckingham. But it is difficult to imagine

Digitized by Google

that so circumstantial a narrative, written by a person who avers that he was present on the occasion, can be wholly without foundation; and, unhappily, there is little in the character either of the favourite or of the Lord Keeper to make the narrative improbable. It is certain that a reconciliation took place on terms humiliating to Bacon, who never more ventured to cross any purpose of any body who bore the name of Villiers. He put a strong curb on those angry passions which had for the first time in his life mastered his prudence. He went through the forms of a reconciliation with Coke, and did his best, by seeking opportunities of paying little civilities, and by avoiding all that could produce collision, to tame the untameable ferocity of his old enemy.

In the main, however, Bacon's life, while he held the Great Seal, was, in outward appearance, most enviable. In London he lived with great dignity at York House, the venerable mansion of his father. Here it was that, in January, 1620, he celebrated his entrance into his sixtieth year amidst a splendid circle of friends. He had then exchanged the appellation of Keeper for the higher title of Chancellor. Ben Jonson was one of the party, and wrote on the occasion some of the happiest of his rugged rhymes. All things, he tells us, seemed to smile about the old house, "the fire, the wine, the men." The spectacle of the accomplished host, after a life marked by no great disaster, entering on a green old age, in the enjoyment of riches, power, high honours, undiminished mental activity, and vast literary reputation, made a strong impression on the poet, if we may judge from those well-known lines;

> "England's high Chancellor, the destined heir,
> In his soft cradle, to his father's chair."

Digitized by Google

Whose even thread the Fates spin round and full
Out of their choicest and their whitest wool."

In the intervals of rest which Bacon's political and judicial functions afforded, he was in the habit of retiring to Gorhambury. At that place his business was literature, and his favourite amusement gardening, which in one of his most interesting Essays he calls "the purest of human pleasures." In his magnificent grounds, he erected, at a cost of ten thousand pounds, a retreat to which he repaired when he wished to avoid all visitors, and to devote himself wholly to study. On such occasions, a few young men of distinguished talents were sometimes the companions of his retirement; and among them his quick eye soon discerned the superior abilities of Thomas Hobbes. It is not probable however, that he fully appreciated the powers of his disciple, or foresaw the vast influence, both for good and for evil, which that most vigorous and acute of human intellects was destined to exercise on the two succeeding generations.

In January, 1621, Bacon had reached the zenith of his fortunes. He had just published the *Novum Organum;* and that extraordinary book had drawn forth the warmest expressions of admiration from the ablest men in Europe. He had obtained honours of a widely different kind, but perhaps not less valued by him. He had been created Baron Verulam. He had subsequently been raised to the higher dignity of Viscount St. Albans. His patent was drawn in the most flattering terms, and the Prince of Wales signed it as a witness. The ceremony of investiture was performed with great state at Theobalds, and Buckingham condescended to be one of the chief actors. Posterity has felt that the greatest of English philosophers could de-

Digitized by Google

rive no accession of dignity from any title which James could bestow, and, in defiance of the royal letters patent, has obstinately refused to degrade Francis Bacon into Viscount St. Albans.

In a few weeks was signally brought to the test the value of those objects for which Bacon had sullied his integrity, had resigned his independence, had violated the most sacred obligations of friendship and gratitude, had flattered the worthless, had persecuted the innocent, had tampered with judges, had tortured prisoners, had plundered suitors, had wasted on paltry intrigues, all the powers of the most exquisitely constructed intellect that has ever been bestowed on any of the children of men. A sudden and terrible reverse was at hand. A Parliament had been summoned. After six years of silence the voice of the nation was again to be heard. Only three days after the pageant which was performed at Theobalds in honour of Bacon, the Houses met.

Want of money had, as usual, induced the King to convoke his Parliament. It may be doubted, however, whether, if he or his ministers had been at all aware of the state of public feeling, they would not have tried any expedient, or borne with any inconvenience, rather than have ventured to face the deputies of a justly exasperated nation. But they did not discern those times. Indeed almost all the political blunders of James, and of his more unfortunate son, arose from one great error. During the fifty years which preceded the Long Parliament, a great and progressive change was taking place in the public mind. The nature and extent of this change was not in the least understood by either of the first two Kings of the House of Stuart, or by any of their advisers. That the nation became more and more discontented every year, that every House of

Digitized by Google

Commons was more unmanageable than that which had preceded it, were facts which it was impossible not to perceive. But the Court could not understand why these things were so. The Court could not see that the English people and the English Government, though they might once have been well suited to each other, were suited to each other no longer; that the nation had outgrown its old institutions, was every day more uneasy under them, was pressing against them, and would soon burst through them. The alarming phænomena, the existence of which no sycophant could deny, were ascribed to every cause except the true one. "In my first Parliament," said James, "I was a novice. In my next, there was a kind of beasts called undertakers," and so forth. In the third Parliament he could hardly be called a novice, and those beasts, the undertakers, did not exist. Yet his third Parliament gave him more trouble than either the first or the second.

The Parliament had no sooner met than the House of Commons proceeded, in a temperate and respectful, but most determined manner, to discuss the public grievances. Their first attacks were directed against those odious patents, under cover of which Buckingham and his creatures had pillaged and oppressed the nation. The vigour with which these proceedings were conducted spread dismay through the Court. Buckingham thought himself in danger, and, in his alarm, had recourse to an adviser who had lately acquired considerable influence over him, Williams, Dean of Westminster. This person had already been of great use to the favourite in a very delicate matter. Buckingham had set his heart on marrying Lady Catherine Manners, daughter and heiress of the Earl of Rutland. But the difficulties were great. The Earl

Digitized by Google

was haughty and impracticable, and the young lady was a Catholic. Williams soothed the pride of the father, and found arguments which, for a time at least, quieted the conscience of the daughter. For these services he had been rewarded with considerable preferment in the Church; and he was now rapidly rising to the same place in the regard of Buckingham which had formerly been occupied by Bacon.

Williams was one of those who are wiser for others than for themselves. His own public life was unfortunate, and was made unfortunate by his strange want of judgment and self-command at several important conjunctures. But the counsel which he gave on this occasion showed no want of worldly wisdom. He advised the favourite to abandon all thoughts of defending the monopolies, to find some foreign embassy for his brother Sir Edward, who was deeply implicated in the villanies of Mompesson, and to leave the other offenders to the justice of Parliament. Buckingham received this advice with the warmest expressions of gratitude, and declared that a load had been lifted from his heart. He then repaired with Williams to the royal presence. They found the King engaged in earnest consultation with Prince Charles. The plan of operations proposed by the Dean was fully discussed, and approved in all its parts.

The first victims whom the Court abandoned to the vengeance of the Commons were Sir Giles Mompesson and Sir Francis Michell. It was some time before Bacon began to entertain any apprehensions. His talents and his address gave him great influence in the house of which he had lately become a member, as indeed they must have in any assembly. In the House of Commons he had many personal friends and many

Digitized by Google

warm admirers. But at length, about six weeks after the meeting of Parliament, the storm burst.

A committee of the lower House had been appointed to inquire into the state of the Courts of Justice. On the fifteenth of March the chairman of that committee, Sir Robert Philips, member for Bath, reported that great abuses had been discovered. "The person," said he, "against whom these things are alleged is no less than the Lord Chancellor, a man so endued with all parts, both of nature and art, as that I will say no more of him, being not able to say enough." Sir Robert then proceeded to state, in the most temperate manner, the nature of the charges. A person of the name of Aubrey had a case depending in Chancery. He had been almost ruined by law-expenses, and his patience had been exhausted by the delays of the court. He received a hint from some of the hangers-on of the Chancellor that a present of one hundred pounds would expedite matters. The poor man had not the sum required. However, having found out an usurer who accommodated him with it at high interest, he carried it to York House. The Chancellor took the money, and his dependents assured the suitor that all would go right. Aubrey was, however, disappointed; for, after considerable delay, "a killing decree" was pronounced against him. Another suitor of the name of Egerton complained that he had been induced by two of the Chancellor's jackals to make his Lordship a present of four hundred pounds, and that, nevertheless, he had not been able to obtain a decree in his favour. The evidence to these facts was overwhelming. Bacon's friends could only entreat the House to suspend its judgment, and to send up the case to the Lords, in a form less offensive than an impeachment.

Digitized by Google

On the nineteenth of March the King sent a message to the Commons, expressing his deep regret that so eminent a person as the Chancellor should be suspected of misconduct. His Majesty declared that he had no wish to screen the guilty from justice, and proposed to appoint a new kind of tribunal, consisting of eighteen commissioners, who might be chosen from among the members of the two Houses, to investigate the matter. The Commons were not disposed to depart from their regular course of proceeding. On the same day they held a conference with the Lords, and delivered in the heads of the accusation against the Chancellor. At this conference Bacon was not present. Overwhelmed with shame and remorse, and abandoned by all those in whom he had weakly put his trust, he had shut himself up in his chamber from the eyes of men. The dejection of his mind soon disordered his body. Buckingham, who visited him by the King's order, "found his Lordship very sick and heavy." It appears from a pathetic letter which the unhappy man addressed to the Peers on the day of the conference, that he neither expected nor wished to survive his disgrace. During several days he remained in his bed, refusing to see any human being. He passionately told his attendants to leave him, to forget him, never again to name his name, never to remember that there had been such a man in the world. In the mean time, fresh instances of corruption were every day brought to the knowledge of his accusers. The number of charges rapidly increased from two to twenty-three. The Lords entered on the investigation of the case with laudable alacrity. Some witnesses were examined at the bar of the House. A select committee was appointed to take the depositions

Digitized by Google

of others; and the inquiry was rapidly proceeding, when, on the twenty-sixth of March, the King adjourned the Parliament for three weeks.

This measure revived Bacon's hopes. He made the most of his short respite. He attempted to work on the feeble mind of the King. He appealed to all the strongest feelings of James, to his fears, to his vanity, to his high notions of prerogative. Would the Solomon of the age commit so gross an error as to encourage the encroaching spirit of Parliaments? Would God's anointed, accountable to God alone, pay homage to the clamorous multitude? "Those," exclaimed Bacon, "who now strike at the Chancellor will soon strike at the Crown. I am the first sacrifice. I wish I may be the last." But all his eloquence and address were employed in vain. Indeed, whatever Mr. Montagu may say, we are firmly convinced that it was not in the King's power to save Bacon, without having recourse to measures which would have convulsed the realm. The Crown had not sufficient influence over the Parliament to procure an acquittal in so clear a case of guilt. And to dissolve a Parliament which is universally allowed to have been one of the best Parliaments that ever sat, which had acted liberally and respectfully towards the Sovereign, and which enjoyed in the highest degree the favour of the people, only in order to stop a grave, temperate, and constitutional inquiry into the personal integrity of the first judge in the kingdom, would have been a measure more scandalous and absurd than any of those which were the ruin of the House of Stuart. Such a measure, while it would have been as fatal to the Chancellor's honour as a conviction, would have endangered the very existence of the monarchy. The

Digitized by Google

King, acting by the advice of Williams, very properly refused to engage in a dangerous struggle with his people, for the purpose of saving from legal condemnation a minister whom it was impossible to save from dishonour. He advised Bacon to plead guilty, and promised to do all in his power to mitigate the punishment. Mr. Montagu is exceedingly angry with James on this account. But though we are, in general, very little inclined to admire that Prince's conduct, we really think that his advice was, under all the circumstances, the best advice that could have been given.

On the seventeenth of April the Houses reassembled, and the Lords resumed their inquiries into the abuses of the Court of Chancery. On the twenty-second, Bacon addressed to the Peers a letter, which the Prince of Wales condescended to deliver. In this artful and pathetic composition, the Chancellor acknowledged his guilt in guarded and general terms, and, while acknowledging, endeavoured to palliate it. This, however, was not thought sufficient by his judges. They required a more particular confession, and sent him a copy of the charges. On the thirtieth, he delivered a paper in which he admitted, with few and unimportant reservations, the truth of the accusations brought against him, and threw himself entirely on the mercy of his peers. "Upon advised consideration of the charges," said he, "descending into my own conscience, and calling my memory to account so far as I am able, I do plainly and ingenuously confess that I am guilty of corruption, and do renounce all defence."

The Lords came to a resolution that the Chancellor's confession appeared to be full and ingenuous, and sent a committee to inquire of him whether it was

Digitized by Google

really subscribed by himself. The deputies, among whom was Southampton, the common friend, many years before, of Bacon and Essex, performed their duty with great delicacy. Indeed the agonies of such a mind and the degradation of such a name might well have softened the most obdurate natures. "My Lords," said Bacon, "it is my act, my hand, my heart. I beseech your Lordships to be merciful to a broken reed." They withdrew; and he again retired to his chamber in the deepest dejection. The next day, the sergeant-at-arms and the usher of the House of Lords came to conduct him to Westminster Hall, where sentence was to be pronounced. But they found him so unwell that he could not leave his bed; and this excuse for his absence was readily accepted. In no quarter does there appear to have been the smallest desire to add to his humiliation.

The sentence was, however, severe, the more severe, no doubt, because the Lords knew that it would not be executed, and that they had an excellent opportunity of exhibiting, at small cost, the inflexibility of their justice, and their abhorrence of corruption. Bacon was condemned to pay a fine of forty thousand pounds, and to be imprisoned in the Tower during the King's pleasure. He was declared incapable of holding any office in the State or of sitting in Parliament; and he was banished for life from the verge of the court. In such misery and shame ended that long career of worldly wisdom and worldly prosperity.

Even at this pass Mr. Montagu does not desert his hero. He seems indeed to think that the attachment of an editor ought to be as devoted as that of Mr. Moore's lovers; and cannot conceive what biography was made for,

Digitized by Google

"if 'tis not the same
Through joy and through torment, through glory and shame."

He assures us that Bacon was innocent, that he had the means of making a perfectly satisfactory defence, that when he "plainly and ingenuously confessed that he was guilty of corruption," and when he afterwards solemnly affirmed that his confession was "his act, his hand, his heart," he was telling a great lie, and that he refrained from bringing forward proofs of his innocence, because he durst not disobey the King and the favourite, who, for his own selfish objects, pressed him to plead guilty.

Now, in the first place, there is not the smallest reason to believe that, if James and Buckingham had thought that Bacon had a good defence, they would have prevented him from making it. What conceivable motive had they for doing so? Mr. Montagu perpetually repeats that it was their interest to sacrifice Bacon. But he overlooks an obvious distinction. It was their interest to sacrifice Bacon on the supposition of his guilt; but not on the supposition of his innocence. James was very properly unwilling to run the risk of protecting his Chancellor against the Parliament. But if the Chancellor had been able, by force of argument, to obtain an acquittal from the Parliament, we have no doubt that both the King and Villiers would have heartily rejoiced. They would have rejoiced, not merely on account of their friendship for Bacon, which seems, however, to have been as sincere as most friendships of that sort, but on selfish grounds. Nothing could have strengthened the government more than such a victory. The King and the favourite abandoned the Chancellor because they were unable to avert his disgrace, and unwilling to share it. Mr. Montagu mistakes effect for

Digitized by Google

cause. He thinks that Bacon did not prove his innocence, because he was not supported by the Court. The truth evidently is that the Court did not venture to support Bacon, because he could not prove his innocence.

Again, it seems strange that Mr. Montagu should not perceive that, while attempting to vindicate Bacon's reputation, he is really casting on it the foulest of all aspersions. He imputes to his idol a degree of meanness and depravity more loathsome than judicial corruption itself. A corrupt judge may have many good qualities. But a man who, to please a powerful patron, solemnly declares himself guilty of corruption when he knows himself to be innocent, must be a monster of servility and impudence. Bacon was, to say nothing of his highest claims to respect, a gentleman, a nobleman, a scholar, a statesman, a man of the first consideration in society, a man far advanced in years. Is it possible to believe that such a man would, to gratify any human being, irreparably ruin his own character by his own act? Imagine a grey-headed judge, full of years and honours, owning with tears, with pathetic assurances of his penitence and of his sincerity, that he has been guilty of shameful mal-practices, repeatedly asseverating the truth of his confession, subscribing it with his own hand, submitting to conviction, receiving a humiliating sentence and acknowledging its justice, and all this when he has it in his power to show that his conduct has been irreproachable! The thing is incredible. But if we admit it to be true, what must we think of such a man, if indeed he deserves the name of man, who thinks any thing that kings and minions can bestow more precious than honour, or any thing that they can inflict more terrible than infamy?

Digitized by Google

Of this most disgraceful imputation we fully acquit Bacon. He had no defence; and Mr. Montagu's affectionate attempt to make a defence for him has altogether failed.

The grounds on which Mr. Montagu rests the case are two; the first, that the taking of presents was usual, and, what he seems to consider as the same thing, not discreditable; the second, that these presents were not taken as bribes.

Mr. Montagu brings forward many facts in support of his first proposition. He is not content with showing that many English judges formerly received gifts from suitors, but collects similar instances from foreign nations and ancient times. He goes back to the commonwealths of Greece, and attempts to press into his service a line of Homer and a sentence of Plutarch, which, we fear, will hardly serve his turn. The gold of which Homer speaks was not intended to fee the judges, but was paid into court for the benefit of the successful litigant; and the gratuities which Pericles, as Plutarch states, distributed among the members of the Athenian tribunals, were legal wages paid out of the public revenue. We can supply Mr. Montagu with passages much more in point. Hesiod, who like poor Aubrey, had a "killing decree" made against him in the Chancery of Ascra, forgot decorum so far that he ventured to designate the learned persons who presided in that court, as βασιλῆας δωροφάγους. Plutarch and Diodorus have handed down to the latest ages the respectable name of Anytus, the son of Anthemion, the first defendant who, eluding all the safeguards which the ingenuity of Solon could devise, succeeded in corrupting a bench of Athenian judges. We are indeed so far from grudging Mr. Montagu the aid of Greece, that we will

Digitized by Google

give him Rome into the bargain. We acknowledge that the honourable senators who tried Verres received presents which were worth more than the fee-simple of York House and Gorhambury together, and that the no less honorable senators and knights who professed to believe in the *alibi* of Clodius obtained marks still more extraordinary of the esteem and gratitude of the defendant. In short, we are ready to admit that, before Bacon's time, and in Bacon's time, judges were in the habit of receiving gifts from suitors.

But is this a defence? We think not. The robberies of Cacus and Barabbas are no apology for those of Turpin. The conduct of the two men of Belial who swore away the life of Naboth has never been cited as an excuse for the perjuries of Oates and Dangerfield. Mr. Montagu has confounded two things which it is necessary carefully to distinguish from each other, if we wish to form a correct judgment of the characters of men of other countries and other times. That an immoral action is, in a particular society, generally considered as innocent, is a good plea for an individual who, being one of that society, and having adopted the notions which prevail among his neighbors, commits that action. But the circumstance that a great many people are in the habit of committing immoral actions is no plea at all. We should think it unjust to call St. Louis a wicked man, because in an age in which toleration was generally regarded as a sin, he persecuted heretics. We should think it unjust to call Cowper's friend, John Newton, a hypocrite and monster, because at a time when the slave-trade was commonly considered by the most respectable people as an innocent and beneficial traffic, he went, largely provided with hymn-books and handcuffs on a Guinea

Digitized by Google

voyage. But the circumstance that there are twenty thousand thieves in London, is no excuse for a fellow who is caught breaking into a shop. No man is to be blamed for not making discoveries in morality, for not finding out that something which everybody else thinks to be good is really bad. But, if a man does that which he and all around him know to be bad, it is no excuse for him that many others have done the same. We should be ashamed of spending so much time in pointing out so clear a distinction, but that Mr. Montagu seems altogether to overlook it.

Now to apply these principles to the case before us; let Mr. Montagu prove that, in Bacon's age, the practices for which Bacon was punished were generally considered as innocent; and we admit that he has made out his point. But this we defy him to do. That these practices were common we admit. But they were common just as all wickedness to which there is strong temptation always was and always will be common. They were common just as theft, cheating, perjury, adultery have always been common. They were common, not because people did not know what was right, but because people liked to do what was wrong. They were common, though prohibited by law. They were common, though condemned by public opinion. They were common, because in that age law and public opinion united had not sufficient force to restrain the greediness of powerful and unprincipled magistrates. They were common, as every crime will be common when the gain to which it leads is great, and the chance of punishment small. But, though common, they were universally allowed to be altogether unjustifiable; they were in the highest degree odious; and, though many were guilty of them, none had the audacity publicly to avow and defend them.

Digitized by Google

We could give a thousand proofs that the opinion then entertained concerning these practices was such as we have described. But we will content ourselves with calling a single witness, honest Hugh Latimer. His sermons, preached more than seventy years before the inquiry into Bacon's conduct, abound with the sharpest invectives against those very practices of which Bacon was guilty, and which, as Mr. Montagu seems to think, nobody ever considered as blamable till Bacon was punished for them. We could easily fill twenty pages with the homely, but just and forcible rhetoric of the brave old bishop. We shall select a few passages as fair specimens, and no more than fair specimens of the rest. "*Omnes diligunt munera.* They all love bribes. Bribery is a princely kind of thieving. They will be waged by the rich, either to give sentence against the poor, or to put off the poor man's cause. This is the noble theft of princes and magistrates. They are bribe-takers. Nowadays they call them gentle rewards. Let them leave their colouring, and call them by their Christian name — bribes." And again; "Cambyses was a great emperor, such another as our master is. He had many lord deputies, lord presidents, and lieutenants under him. It is a great while ago since I read the history. It chanced he had under him in one of his dominions a briber, a gift-taker, a gratifier of rich men; he followed gifts as fast as he that followed the pudding, a handmaker in his office to make his son a great man, as the old saying is: Happy is the child whose father goeth to the devil. The cry of the poor widow came to the emperor's ear, and caused him to flay the judge quick, and laid his skin in the chair of judgment, that all judges that should give judgment afterward should sit in the same skin. Surely it was

Digitized by Google

a goodly sign, a goodly monument, the sign of the judge's skin. I pray God we may once see the skin in England." "I am sure," says he in another sermon, "this is *scala inferni*, the right way to hell, to be covetous, to take bribes, and pervert justice. If a judge should ask me the way to hell, I would show him this way. First, let him be a covetous man; let his heart be poisoned with covetousness. Then let him go a little further and take bribes; and, lastly, pervert judgment. Lo, here is the mother, and the daughter, and the daughter's daughter. Avarice is the mother: she brings forth bribe-taking, and bribe-taking perverting of judgment. There lacks a fourth thing to make up the mess, which, so help me God, if I were judge, should be *hangum tuum*, a Tyburn tippet to take with him; an it were the judge of the King's Bench, my Lord Chief Judge of England, yea, an it were my Lord Chancellor himself, to Tyburn with him." We will quote but one more passage. "He that took the silver basin and ewer for a bribe, thinketh that it will never come out. But he may now know that I know it, and I know it not alone; there be more beside me that know it. Oh, briber and bribery! He was never a good man that will so take bribes. Nor can I believe that he that is a briber will be a good justice. It will never be merry in England till we have the skins of such. For what needeth bribing where men do their things uprightly?"

This was not the language of a great philosopher who had made new discoveries in moral and political science. It was the plain talk of a plain man, who sprang from the body of the people, who sympathised strongly with their wants and their feelings, and who boldly uttered their opinions. It was on account of the

Digitized by Google

fearless way in which stout-hearted old Hugh exposed the misdeeds of men in ermine tippets and gold collars, that the Londoners cheered him, as he walked down the Strand to preach at Whitehall, struggled for a touch of his gown, and bawled "Have at them, Father Latimer." It is plain, from the passages which we have quoted, and from fifty others which we might quote, that, long before Bacon was born, the accepting of presents by a judge was known to be a wicked and shameful act, that the fine words under which it was the fashion to veil such corrupt practices were even then seen through by the common people, that the distinction on which Mr. Montagu insists between compliments and bribes was even then laughed at as a mere colouring. There may be some oratorical exaggeration in what Latimer says about the Tyburn tippet and the sign of the judge's skin; but the fact that he ventured to use such expressions is amply sufficient to prove that the gift-taking judges, the receivers of silver basins and ewers, were regarded as such pests of the commonwealth that a venerable divine might, without any breach of Christian charity, publicly pray to God for their detection and their condign punishment.

Mr. Montagu tells us, most justly, that we ought not to transfer the opinions of our age to a former age. But he has himself committed a greater error than that against which he has cautioned his readers. Without any evidence, nay, in the face of the strongest evidence, he ascribes to the people of a former age a set of opinions which no people ever held. But any hypothesis is in his view more probable than that Bacon should have been a dishonest man. We firmly believe that, if papers were to be discovered which should irresistibly prove that Bacon was concerned in the poisoning of

Digitized by Google

Sir Thomas Overbury, Mr. Montagu would tell us that, at the beginning of the seventeenth century, it was not thought improper in a man to put arsenic into the broth of his friends, and that we ought to blame, not Bacon, but the age in which he lived.

But why should we have recourse to any other evidence, when the proceeding against Lord Bacon is itself the best evidence on the subject? When Mr. Montagu tells us that we ought not to transfer the opinions of our age to Bacon's age, he appears altogether to forget that it was by men of Bacon's own age that Bacon was prosecuted, tried, convicted, and sentenced. Did not they know what their own opinions were? Did not they know whether they thought the taking of gifts by a judge a crime or not? Mr. Montagu complains bitterly that Bacon was induced to abstain from making a defence. But, if Bacon's defence resembled that which is made for him in the volume before us, it would have been unnecessary to trouble the Houses with it. The Lords and Commons did not want Bacon to tell them the thoughts of their own hearts, to inform them that they did not consider such practices as those in which they had detected him as at all culpable. Mr. Montagu's proposition may indeed be fairly stated thus: — It was very hard that Bacon's contemporaries should think it wrong in him to do what they did not think it wrong in him to do. Hard indeed; and withal somewhat improbable. Will any person say that the Commons who impeached Bacon for taking presents, and the Lords who sentenced him to fine, imprisonment, and degradation for taking presents, did not know that the taking of presents was a crime? Or, will any person say that Bacon did not know what the whole House of Commons and the

Digitized by Google

whole House of Lords knew? Nobody who is not prepared to maintain one of these absurd propositions can deny that Bacon committed what he knew to be a crime.

It cannot be pretended that the Houses were seeking occasion to ruin Bacon, and that they therefore brought him to punishment on charges which they themselves knew to be frivolous. In no quarter was there the faintest indication of a disposition to treat him harshly. Through the whole proceeding there was no symptom of personal animosity or of factious violence in either House. Indeed, we will venture to say that no State-Trial in our history is more creditable to all who took part in it, either as prosecutors or judges. The decency, the gravity, the public spirit, the justice moderated but not unnerved by compassion, which appeared in every part of the transaction, would do honour to the most respectable public men in our own times. The accusers, while they discharged their duty to their constituents by bringing the misdeeds of the Chancellor to light, spoke with admiration of his many eminent qualities. The Lords, while condemning him, complimented him on the ingenuousness of his confession, and spared him the humiliation of a public appearance at their bar. So strong was the contagion of good feeling that even Sir Edward Coke, for the first time in his life, behaved like a gentleman. No criminal ever had more temperate prosecutors than Bacon. No criminal ever had more favourable judges. If he was convicted, it was because it was impossible to acquit him without offering the grossest outrage to justice and common sense.

Mr. Montagu's other argument, namely, that Bacon, though he took gifts, did not take bribes, seems to us as futile as that which we have considered. Indeed,

Digitized by Google

we might be content to leave it to be answered by the plainest man among our readers. Demosthenes noticed it with contempt more than two thousand years ago. Latimer, we have seen, treated this sophistry with similar disdain. "Leave colouring," said he, "and call these things by their Christian name, bribes." Mr. Montagu attempts, somewhat unfairly, we must say, to represent the presents which Bacon received as similar to the perquisites which suitors paid to the members of the Parliaments of France. The French magistrate had a legal right to his fee; and the amount of the fee was regulated by law. Whether this be a good mode of remunerating judges is not the question. But what analogy is there between payments of this sort and the presents which Bacon received, presents which were not sanctioned by the law, which were not made under the public eye, and of which the amount was regulated only by private bargain between the magistrate and the suitor?

Again, it is mere trifling to say that Bacon could not have meant to act corruptly because he employed the agency of men of rank, of bishops, privy councillors, and members of Parliament; as if the whole history of that generation was not full of the low actions of high people; as if it was not notorious that men, as exalted in rank as any of the decoys that Bacon employed, had pimped for Somerset and poisoned Overbury.

But, says Mr. Montagu, these presents "were made openly and with the greatest publicity." This would indeed be a strong argument in favour of Bacon. But we deny the fact. In one, and one only, of the cases in which Bacon was accused of corruptly receiving gifts, does he appear to have received a gift publicly. This was in a matter depending between the Company

Digitized by Google

of Apothecaries and the Company of Grocers. Bacon, in his Confession, insisted strongly on the circumstance that he had on this occasion taken a present publicly, as a proof that he had not taken it corruptly. Is it not clear that, if he had taken the presents mentioned in the other charges in the same public manner, he would have dwelt on this point in his answer to those charges? The fact that he insists so strongly on the publicity of one particular present is of itself sufficient to prove that the other presents were not publicly taken. Why he took this present publicly and the rest secretly, is evident. He on that occasion acted openly, because he was acting honestly. He was not on that occasion sitting judicially. He was called in to effect an amicable arrangement between two parties. Both were satisfied with his decision. Both joined in making him a present in return for his trouble. Whether it was quite delicate in a man of his rank to accept a present under such circumstances, may be questioned. But there is no ground in this case for accusing him of corruption.

Unhappily, the very circumstances which prove him to have been innocent in this case prove him to have been guilty on the other charges. Once, and once only, he alleges that he received a present publicly. The natural inference is that in all the other cases mentioned in the articles against him he received presents secretly. When we examine the single case in which he alleges that he received a present publicly, we find that it is also the single case in which there was no gross impropriety in his receiving a present. Is it then possible to doubt that his reason for not receiving other presents in as public a manner was that he knew that it was wrong to receive them?

One argument still remains, plausible in appearance,

Digitized by Google

but admitting of easy and complete refutation. The two chief complainants, Aubrey and Egerton, had both made presents to the Chancellor. But he had decided against them both. Therefore, he had not received those presents as bribes. "The complaints of his accusers were," says Mr. Montagu, "not that the gratuities had, but that they had not influenced Bacon's judgment, as he had decided against them."

The truth is, that it is precisely in this way that an extensive system of corruption is generally detected. A person who, by a bribe, has procured a decree in his favour, is by no means likely to come forward of his own accord as an accuser. He is content. He has his *quid pro quo*. He is not impelled either by interested or by vindictive motives to bring the transaction before the public. On the contrary, he has almost as strong motives for holding his tongue as the judge himself can have. But when a judge practises corruption, as we fear that Bacon practised it, on a large scale, and has many agents looking out in different quarters for prey, it will sometimes happen that he will be bribed on both sides. It will sometimes happen that he will receive money from suitors who are so obviously in the wrong that he cannot with decency do any thing to serve them. Thus he will now and then be forced to pronounce against a person from whom he has received a present; and he makes that person a deadly enemy. The hundreds who have got what they paid for remain quiet. It is the two or three who have paid, and have nothing to show for their money, who are noisy.

The memorable case of the Goëzmans is an example of this. Beaumarchais had an important suit depending before the Parliament of Paris. M. Goëzman was the judge on whom chiefly the decision depended. It

Digitized by Google

was hinted to Beaumarchais that Madame Goëzman might be propitiated by a present. He accordingly offered a purse of gold to the lady, who received it graciously. There can be no doubt that, if the decision of the court had been favourable to him, these things would never have been known to the world. But he lost his cause. Almost the whole sum which he had expended in bribery was immediately refunded; and those who had disappointed him probably thought that he would not, for the mere gratification of his malevolence, make public a transaction which was discreditable to himself as well as to them. They knew little of him. He soon taught them to curse the day in which they had dared to trifle with a man of so revengeful and turbulent a spirit, of such dauntless effrontery, and of such eminent talents for controversy and satire. He compelled the Parliament to put a degrading stigma on M. Goëzman. He drove Madame Goëzman to a convent. Till it was too late to pause, his excited passions did not suffer him to remember that he could effect their ruin only by disclosures ruinous to himself. We could give other instances. But it is needless. No person well acquainted with human nature can fail to perceive that, if the doctrine for which Mr. Montagu contends were admitted, society would be deprived of almost the only chance which it has of detecting the corrupt practices of judges.

We return to our narrative. The sentence of Bacon had scarcely been pronounced when it was mitigated. He was indeed sent to the Tower. But this was merely a form. In two days he was set at liberty, and soon after he retired to Gorhambury. His fine was speedily released by the Crown. He was next suffered to present himself at Court; and at length, in 1624, the

Digitized by Google

rest of his punishment was remitted. He was now at liberty to resume his seat in the House of Lords, and he was actually summoned to the next Parliament. But age, infirmity, and perhaps shame, prevented him from attending. The Government allowed him a pension of twelve hundred pounds a year; and his whole annual income is estimated by Mr. Montagu at two thousand five hundred pounds, a sum which was probably above the average income of a nobleman of that generation, and which was certainly sufficient for comfort and even for splendour. Unhappily, Bacon was fond of display, and unused to pay minute attention to domestic affairs. He was not easily persuaded to give up any part of the magnificence to which he had been accustomed in the time of his power and prosperity. No pressure of distress could induce him to part with the woods of Gorhambury. "I will not," he said, "be stripped of my feathers." He travelled with so splendid an equipage and so large a retinue that Prince Charles, who once fell in with him on the road, exclaimed with surprise, "Well; do what we can, this man scorns to go out in snuff." This carelessness and ostentation reduced Bacon to frequent distress. He was under the necessity of parting with York House, and of taking up his residence, during his visits to London, at his old chambers in Gray's Inn. He had other vexations, the exact nature of which is unknown. It is evident from his will that some part of his wife's conduct had greatly disturbed and irritated him.

But, whatever might be his pecuniary difficulties or his conjugal discomforts, the powers of his intellect still remained undiminished. Those noble studies for which he had found leisure in the midst of professional drudgery and of courtly intrigues gave to this last sad stage of

Digitized by Google

his life a dignity beyond what power or titles could bestow. Impeached, convicted, sentenced, driven with ignominy from the presence of his Sovereign, shut out from the deliberations of his fellow nobles, loaded with debt, branded with dishonour, sinking under the weight of years, sorrows, and diseases, Bacon was Bacon still. "My conceit of his person," says Ben Jonson very finely, "was never increased towards him by his place or honours; but I have and do reverence him for the greatness that was only proper to himself; in that he seemed to me ever, by his work, one of the greatest men and most worthy of admiration, that had been in many ages. In his adversity I ever prayed that God would give him strength; for greatness he could not want."

The services which Bacon rendered to letters during the last five years of his life, amidst ten thousand distractions and vexations, increase the regret with which we think on the many years which he had wasted, to use the words of Sir Thomas Bodley, "on such study as was not worthy of such a student." He commenced a Digest of the Laws of England, a History of England under the Princes of the House of Tudor, a body of Natural History, a Philosophical Romance. He made extensive and valuable additions to his Essays. He published the inestimable Treatise *De Augmentis Scientiarum*. The very trifles with which he amused himself in hours of pain and languor bore the mark of his mind. The best collection of jests in the world is that which he dictated from memory, without referring to any book, on a day on which illness had rendered him incapable of serious study.

The great apostle of experimental philosophy was

Digitized by Google

destined to be its martyr. It had occurred to him that snow might be used with advantage for the purpose of preventing animal substances from putrefying. On a very cold day, early in the spring of the year 1626, he alighted from his coach near Highgate, in order to try the experiment. He went into a cottage, bought a fowl, and with his own hands stuffed it with snow. While thus engaged he felt a sudden chill, and was soon so much indisposed that it was impossible for him to return to Gray's Inn. The Earl of Arundel, with whom he was well acquainted, had a house at Highgate. To that house Bacon was carried. The Earl was absent; but the servants who were in charge of the place showed great respect and attention to the illustrious guest. Here, after an illness of about a week, he expired early on the morning of Easter-day, 1626. His mind appears to have retained its strength and liveliness to the end. He did not forget the fowl which had caused his death. In the last letter that he ever wrote, with fingers which, as he said, could not steadily hold a pen, he did not omit to mention that the experiment of the snow had succeeded "excellently well."

Our opinion of the moral character of this great man has already been sufficiently explained. Had his life been passed in literary retirement, he would, in all probability, have deserved to be considered, not only as a great philosopher, but as a worthy and good-natured member of society. But neither his principles nor his spirit were such as could be trusted, when strong temptations were to be resisted, and serious dangers to be braved.

In his will he expressed with singular brevity, energy, dignity, and pathos, a mournful conscious-

Digitized by Google

ness that his actions had not been such as to entitle him to the esteem of those under whose observation his life had been passed, and, at the same time, a proud confidence that his writings had secured for him a high and permanent place among the benefactors of mankind. So at least we understand those striking words which have been often quoted, but which we must quote once more; "For my name and memory, I leave it to men's charitable speeches, and to foreign nations, and to the next age."

His confidence was just. From the day of his death his fame has been constantly and steadily progressive; and we have no doubt that his name will be named with reverence to the latest ages, and to the remotest ends of the civilised world.

The chief peculiarity of Bacon's philosophy seems to us to have been this, that it aimed at things altogether different from those which his predecessors had proposed to themselves. This was his own opinion. "Finis scientiarum," says he, "a nemine adhuc bene positus est." [1] And again, "Omnium gravissimus error in deviatione ab ultimo doctrinarum fine consistit." [2] "Nec ipsa meta," says he elsewhere, "adhuc ulli, quod sciam, mortalium posita est et defixa." [3] The more carefully his works are examined, the more clearly, we think, it will appear that this is the real clue to his whole system, and that he used means different from those used by other philosophers, because he wished to arrive at an end altogether different from theirs.

What then was the end which Bacon proposed to himself? It was, to use his own emphatic expression,

[1] *Novum Organum*, Lib. 1. Aph. 81. [2] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 1.
[3] *Cogitata et visa.*

Digitized by Google

"fruit." It was the multiplying of human enjoyments and the mitigating of human sufferings. It was "the relief of man's estate." [1] It was "commodis humanis inservire." [2] It was "efficaciter operari ad sublevanda vitæ humanæ incommoda." [3] It was "dotare vitam humanam novis inventis et copiis." [4] It was "genus humanum novis operibus et potestatibus continuo dotare." [5] This was the object of all his speculations in every department of science, in natural philosophy, in legislation, in politics, in morals.

Two words form the key of the Baconian doctrine, Utility and Progress. The ancient philosophy disdained to be useful, and was content to be stationary. It dealt largely in theories of moral perfection, which were so sublime that they never could be more than theories; in attempts to solve insoluble enigmas; in exhortations to the attainment of unattainable frames of mind. It could not condescend to the humble office of ministering to the comfort of human beings. All the schools contemned that office as degrading; some censured it as immoral. Once indeed Posidonius, a distinguished writer of the age of Cicero and Cæsar, so far forgot himself as to enumerate, among the humbler blessings which mankind owed to philosophy, the discovery of the principle of the arch, and the introduction of the use of metals. This eulogy was considered as an affront, and was taken up with proper spirit. Seneca vehemently disclaims these insulting compliments.[6] Philosophy, according to him, has nothing to do with teaching men to rear arched roofs over their heads. The true philosopher does not care

[1] *Advancement of Learning*, Book 1.
[2] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 7. Cap. 1.
[3] *Ib.* Lib. 2. Cap. 2.
[4] *Novum Organum*, Lib. 1. Aph. 81.
[5] *Cogitata et visa.*
[6] Seneca, *Epist.* 90.

Digitized by Google

whether he has an arched roof or any roof. Philosophy has nothing to do with teaching men the uses of metals. She teaches us to be independent of all material substances, of all mechanical contrivances. The wise man lives according to nature. Instead of attempting to add to the physical comforts of his species, he regrets that his lot was not cast in that golden age when the human race had no protection against the cold but the skins of wild beasts, no screen from the sun but a cavern. To impute to such a man any share in the invention or improvement of a plough, a ship, or a mill, is an insult. "In my own time," says Seneca, "there have been inventions of this sort, transparent windows, tubes for diffusing warmth equally through all parts of a building, short-hand, which has been carried to such a perfection that a writer can keep pace with the most rapid speaker. But the inventing of such things is drudgery for the lowest slaves; philosophy lies deeper. It is not her office to teach men how to use their hands. The object of her lessons is to form the soul. *Non est, inquam, instrumentorum ad usus necessarios opifex.*" If the *non* were left out, this last sentence would be no bad description of the Baconian philosophy, and would, indeed, very much resemble several expressions in the *Novum Organum*. "We shall next be told," exclaims Seneca, "that the first shoemaker was a philosopher." For our own part, if we are forced to make our choice between the first shoemaker, and the author of the three books On Anger, we pronounce for the shoemaker. It may be worse to be angry than to be wet. But shoes have kept millions from being wet; and we doubt whether Seneca ever kept any body from being angry.

Digitized by Google

It is very reluctantly that Seneca can be brought to confess that any philosopher had ever paid the smallest attention to any thing that could possibly promote what vulgar people would consider as the well-being of mankind. He labors to clear Democritus from the disgraceful imputation of having made the first arch, and Anacharsis from the charge of having contrived the potter's wheel. He is forced to own that such a thing might happen; and it may also happen, he tells us, that a philosopher may be swift of foot. But it is not in his character of philosopher that he either wins a race or invents a machine. No, to be sure. The business of a philosopher was to declaim in praise of poverty, with two millions sterling out at usury, to meditate epigrammatic conceits about the evils of luxury, in gardens which moved the envy of sovereigns, to rant about liberty, while fawning on the insolent and pampered freedmen of a tyrant, to celebrate the divine beauty of virtue with the same pen which had just before written a defence of the murder of a mother by a son.

From the cant of this philosophy, a philosophy meanly proud of its own unprofitableness, it is delightful to turn to the lessons of the great English teacher. We can almost forgive all the faults of Bacon's life when we read that singularly graceful and dignified passage: "Ego certe, ut de me ipso, quod res est, loquar, et in iis quæ nunc edo, et in iis quæ in posterum meditor, dignitatem ingenii et nominis mei, si qua sit, sæpius sciens et volens projicio, dum commodis humanis inserviam; quique architectus fortasse in philosophia et scientiis esse debeam, etiam operarius, et bajulus, et quidvis demum fio, cum haud pauca quæ omnino fieri necesse sit, alii autem ob innatam super-

Digitized by Google

biam subterfugiant, ipse sustineam et exsequar." [1] This *philanthropia*, which, as he said in one of the most remarkable of his early letters, "was so fixed in his mind, as it could not be removed," this majestic humility, this persuasion that nothing can be too insignificant for the attention of the wisest, which is not too insignificant to give pleasure or pain to the meanest, is the great characteristic distinction, the essential spirit of the Baconian philosophy. We trace it in all that Bacon has written on Physics, on Laws, on Morals. And we conceive that from this peculiarity all the other peculiarities of his system directly and almost necessarily sprang.

The spirit which appears in the passage of Seneca to which we have referred, tainted the whole body of the ancient philosophy from the time of Socrates downwards, and took possession of intellects with which that of Seneca cannot for a moment be compared. It pervades the dialogues of Plato. It may be distinctly traced in many parts of the works of Aristotle. Bacon has dropped hints, from which it may be inferred that, in his opinion, the prevalence of this feeling was in a great measure to be attributed to the influence of Socrates. Our great countryman evidently did not consider the revolution which Socrates effected in philosophy as a happy event, and constantly maintained that the earlier Greek speculators, Democritus in particular, were, on the whole, superior to their more celebrated successors.[2]

Assuredly if the tree which Socrates planted and

[1] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 7. Cap. 1.

[2] *Novum Organum*, Lib. 1. Aph. 71, 79. *De Augmentis*, Lib. 3. Cap. 4. De Principiis atque originibus. *Cogitata et visa.* Redargutio philosophiarum.

Digitized by Google

Plato watered is to be judged of by its flowers and leaves, it is the noblest of trees. But if we take the homely test of Bacon, if we judge of the tree by its fruits, our opinion of it may perhaps be less favourable. When we sum up all the useful truths which we owe to that philosophy, to what do they amount? We find, indeed, abundant proofs that some of those who cultivated it were men of the first order of intellect. We find among their writings incomparable specimens both of dialectical and rhetorical art. We have no doubt that the ancient controversies were of use, in so far as they served to exercise the faculties of the disputants; for there is no controversy so idle that it may not be of use in this way. But, when we look for something more, for something which adds to the comforts or alleviates the calamities of the human race, we are forced to own ourselves disappointed. We are forced to say with Bacon that this celebrated philosophy ended in nothing but disputation, that it was neither a vineyard nor an olive-ground, but an intricate wood of briars and thistles, from which those who lost themselves in it brought back many scratches and no food.[1]

We readily acknowledge that some of the teachers of this unfruitful wisdom were among the greatest men that the world has ever seen. If we admit the justice of Bacon's censure, we admit it with regret, similar to that which Dante felt when he learned the fate of those illustrious heathens who were doomed to the first circle of Hell.

> "Gran duol mi prese al cuor quando lo 'ntesi,
> Perocché gente di molto valore
> Conobbi che 'n quel limbo eran sospesi."

But in truth the very admiration which we feel for

[1] *Novum Organum*, Lib. 1. Aph. 78.

Digitized by Google

the eminent philosophers of antiquity forces us to adopt the opinion that their powers were systematically misdirected. For how else could it be that such powers should effect so little for mankind? A pedestrian may show as much muscular vigour on a treadmill as on the highway road. But on the road his vigour will assuredly carry him forward; and on the treadmill he will not advance an inch. The ancient philosophy was a treadmill, not a path. It was made up of revolving questions, of controversies which were always beginning again. It was a contrivance for having much exertion and no progress. We must acknowledge that more than once, while contemplating the doctrines of the Academy and the Portico, even as they appear in the transparent splendour of Cicero's incomparable diction, we have been tempted to mutter with the surly centurion in Persius, "Cur quis non prandeat hoc est?" What is the highest good, whether pain be an evil, whether all things be fated, whether we can be certain of any thing, whether we can be certain that we are certain of nothing, whether a wise man can be unhappy, whether all departures from right be equally reprehensible, these, and other questions of the same sort, occupied the brains, the tongues, and the pens of the ablest men in the civilised world during several centuries. This sort of philosophy, it is evident, could not be progressive. It might indeed sharpen and invigorate the minds of those who devoted themselves to it; and so might the disputes of the orthodox Lilliputians and the heretical Blefuscudians about the big ends and the little ends of eggs. But such disputes could add nothing to the stock of knowledge. The human mind accordingly, instead of marching, merely marked time. It took as much trouble as would have sufficed to carry it forward;

Digitized by Google

and yet remained on the same spot. There was no accumulation of truth, no heritage of truth acquired by the labour of one generation and bequeathed to another, to be again transmitted with large additions to a third. Where this philosophy was in the time of Cicero, there it continued to be in the time of Seneca, and there it continued to be in the time of Favorinus. The same sects were still battling with the same unsatisfactory arguments about the same interminable questions. There had been no want of ingenuity, of zeal, of industry. Every trace of intellectual cultivation was there, except a harvest. There had been plenty of ploughing, harrowing, reaping, threshing. But the garners contained only smut and stubble.

The ancient philosophers did not neglect natural science; but they did not cultivate it for the purpose of increasing the power and ameliorating the condition of man. The taint of barrenness had spread from ethical to physical speculations. Seneca wrote largely on natural philosophy, and magnified the importance of that study. But why? Not because it tended to assuage suffering, to multiply the conveniences of life, to extend the empire of man over the material world; but solely because it tended to raise the mind above low cares, to separate it from the body, to exercise its subtilty in the solution of very obscure questions.[1] Thus natural philosophy was considered in the light merely of a mental exercise. It was made subsidiary to the art of disputation; and it consequently proved altogether barren of useful discoveries.

There was one sect which, however absurd and pernicious some of its doctrines may have been, ought,

[1] Seneca, *Nat. Quæst. præf.* Lib. 3.

Digitized by Google

it should seem, to have merited an exception from the general censure which Bacon has pronounced on the ancient schools of wisdom. The Epicurean, who referred all happiness to bodily pleasure, and all evil to bodily pain, might have been expected to exert himself for the purpose of bettering his own physical condition and that of his neighbours. But the thought seems never to have occurred to any member of that school. Indeed, their notion, as reported by their great poet, was, that no more improvements were to be expected in the arts which conduce to the comfort of life.

"Ad victum quæ flagitat usus
Omnia jam ferme mortalibus esse parata."

This contented despondency, this disposition to admire what has been done, and to expect that nothing more will be done, is strongly characteristic of all the schools which preceded the school of Fruit and Progress. Widely as the Epicurean and the Stoic differed on most points, they seem to have quite agreed in their contempt for pursuits so vulgar as to be useful. The philosophy of both was a garrulous, declaiming, canting, wrangling philosophy. Century after century they continued to repeat their hostile war-cries, Virtue and Pleasure; and in the end it appeared that the Epicurean had added as little to the quantity of pleasure as the Stoic to the quantity of virtue. It is on the pedestal of Bacon, not on that of Epicurus, that those noble lines ought to be inscribed:

"O tenebris tantis tam clarum extollere lumen
Qui primus potuisti, illustrans commoda vitæ."

In the fifth century Christianity had conquered Paganism, and Paganism had infected Christianity. The Church was now victorious and corrupt. The

Digitized by Google

rites of the Pantheon had passed into her worship, the subtilties of the Academy into her creed. In an evil day, though with great pomp and solemnity, — we quote the language of Bacon, — was the ill-starred alliance stricken between the old philosophy and the new faith.[1] Questions widely different from those which had employed the ingenuity of Pyrrho and Carneades, but just as subtle, just as interminable, and just as unprofitable, exercised the minds of the lively and voluble Greeks. When learning began to revive in the West, similar trifles occupied the sharp and vigorous intellects of the Schoolmen. There was another sowing of the wind, and another reaping of the whirlwind. The great work of improving the condition of the human race was still considered as unworthy of a man of learning. Those who undertook that task, if what they effected could be readily comprehended, were despised as mechanics; if not, they were in danger of being burned as conjurers.

There cannot be a stronger proof of the degree in which the human mind had been misdirected than the history of the two greatest events which took place during the middle ages. We speak of the invention of Gunpowder and of the invention of Printing. The dates of both are unknown. The authors of both are unknown. Nor was this because men were too rude and ignorant to value intellectual superiority. The inventor of gunpowder appears to have been contemporary with Petrarch and Boccaccio. The inventor of printing was certainly contemporary with Nicholas the Fifth, with Cosmo de' Medici, and with a crowd of distinguished scholars. But the human mind still retained that fatal bent which it had received two

[1] *Cogitata et visa.*

Digitized by Google

thousand years earlier. George of Trebisond and Marsilio Ficino would not easily have been brought to believe that the inventor of the printing-press had done more for mankind than themselves, or than those ancient writers of whom they were the enthusiastic votaries.

At length the time arrived when the barren philosophy which had, during so many ages, employed the faculties of the ablest of men, was destined to fall. It had worn many shapes. It had mingled itself with many creeds. It had survived revolutions in which empires, religions, languages, races, had perished. Driven from its ancient haunts, it had taken sanctuary in that Church which it had persecuted, and had, like the daring fiends of the poet, placed its seat

> "next the seat of God,
> And with its darkness dared affront his light."

Words, and more words, and nothing but words, had been all the fruit of all the toil of all the most renowned sages of sixty generations. But the days of this sterile exuberance were numbered.

Many causes predisposed the public mind to a change. The study of a great variety of ancient writers, though it did not give a right direction to philosophical research, did much towards destroying that blind reverence for authority which had prevailed when Aristotle ruled alone. The rise of the Florentine sect of Platonists, a sect to which belonged some of the finest minds of the fifteenth century, was not an unimportant event. The mere substitution of the Academic for the Peripatetic philosophy would indeed have done little good. But any thing was better than the old habit of unreasoning servility. It was some-

Digitized by Google

thing to have a choice of tyrants. "A spark of freedom," as Gibbon has justly remarked, "was produced by this collision of adverse servitude."

Other causes might be mentioned. But it is chiefly to the great reformation of religion that we owe the great reformation of philosophy. The alliance between the Schools and the Vatican had for ages been so close that those who threw off the dominion of the Vatican could not continue to recognise the authority of the Schools. Most of the chiefs of the schism treated the Peripatetic philosophy with contempt, and spoke of Aristotle as if Aristotle had been answerable for all the dogmas of Thomas Aquinas. "Nullo apud Lutheranos philosophiam esse in pretio," was a reproach which the defenders of the Church of Rome loudly repeated, and which many of the Protestant leaders considered as a compliment. Scarcely any text was more frequently cited by the reformers than that in which St. Paul cautions the Colossians not to let any man spoil them by philosophy. Luther, almost at the outset of his career, went so far as to declare that no man could be at once a proficient in the school of Aristotle and in that of Christ. Zwingle, Bucer, Peter Martyr, Calvin, held similar language. In some of the Scotch universities, the Aristotelian system was discarded for that of Ramus. Thus, before the birth of Bacon, the empire of the scholastic philosophy had been shaken to its foundations. There was in the intellectual world an anarchy resembling that which in the political world often follows the overthrow of an old and deeply rooted government. Antiquity, prescription, the sound of great names, had ceased to awe mankind. The dynasty which had reigned for ages was at an end; and the vacant throne was left to be struggled for by pretenders.

Digitized by Google

The first effect of this great revolution, was, as Bacon most justly observed,[1] to give for a time an undue importance to the mere graces of style. The new breed of scholars, the Aschams and Buchanans, nourished with the finest compositions of the Augustan age, regarded with loathing the dry, crabbed, and barbarous diction of respondents and opponents. They were far less studious about the matter of their writing than about the manner. They succeeded in reforming Latinity; but they never even aspired to effect a reform in philosophy.

At this time Bacon appeared. It is altogether incorrect to say, as has often been said, that he was the first man who rose up against the Aristotelian philosophy when in the height of its power. The authority of that philosophy had, as we have shown, received a fatal blow long before he was born. Several speculators, among whom Ramus is the best known, had recently attempted to form new sects. Bacon's own expressions about the state of public opinion in the time of Luther are clear and strong: "Accedebat," says he, "odium et contemptus, illis ipsis temporibus ortus erga Scholasticos." And again, "Scholasticorum doctrina despectui prorsus haberi cœpit tanquam aspera et barbara."[2] The part which Bacon played in this great change was the part, not of Robespierre, but of Bonaparte. The ancient order of things had been subverted. Some bigots still cherished with devoted loyalty the remembrance of the fallen monarchy and exerted themselves to effect a restoration. But the majority had no such feeling. Freed, yet not knowing how to use their freedom,

[1] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 1.

[2] Both these passages are in the first book of the *De Augmentis*.

Digitized by Google

they pursued no determinate course, and had found no leader capable of conducting them.

That leader at length arose. The philosophy which he taught was essentially new. It differed from that of the celebrated ancient teachers, not merely in method, but also in object. Its object was the good of mankind, in the sense in which the mass of mankind always have understood and always will understand the word good. "Meditor," said Bacon, "instaurationem philosophiæ ejusmodi quæ nihil inanis aut abstracti habeat, quæque vitæ humanæ conditiones in melius provehat."[1]

The difference between the philosophy of Bacon and that of his predecessors cannot, we think, be better illustrated than by comparing his views on some important subjects with those of Plato. We select Plato, because we conceive that he did more than any other person towards giving to the minds of speculative men that bent which they retained till they received from Bacon a new impulse in a diametrically opposite direction.

It is curious to observe how differently these great men estimated the value of every kind of knowledge. Take Arithmetic for example. Plato, after speaking slightly of the convenience of being able to reckon and compute in the ordinary transactions of life, passes to what he considers as a far more important advantage. The study of the properties of numbers, he tells us, habituates the mind to the contemplation of pure truth, and raises us above the material universe. He would have his disciples apply themselves to this study, not that they may be able to buy or sell, not that they may qualify themselves to be shop-

[1] *Redargutio Philosophiarum.*

Digitized by Google

keepers or travelling merchants, but that they may learn to withdraw their minds from the ever-shifting spectacle of this visible and tangible world, and to fix them on the immutable essences of things.[1]

Bacon, on the other hand, valued this branch of knowledge, only on account of its uses with reference to that visible and tangible world which Plato so much despised. He speaks with scorn of the mystical arithmetic of the later Platonists, and laments the propensity of mankind to employ, on mere matters of curiosity, powers the whole exertion of which is required for purposes of solid advantage. He advises arithmeticians to leave these trifles, and to employ themselves in framing convenient expressions, which may be of use in physical researches.[2]

The same reasons which led Plato to recommend the study of arithmetic led him to recommend also the study of mathematics. The vulgar crowd of geometricians, he says, will not understand him. They have practice always in view. They do not know that the real use of the science is to lead men to the knowledge of abstract, essential, eternal truth.[3] Indeed, if we are to believe Plutarch, Plato carried this feeling so far that he considered geometry as degraded by being applied to any purpose of vulgar utility. Archytas, it seems, had framed machines of extraordinary power on mathematical principles.[4] Plato remonstrated with his friend, and declared that this was to degrade a noble intellectual exercise into a low craft, fit only for carpenters and wheelwrights. The office of geometry, he

[1] Plato's *Republic*, Book 7. [2] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 3. Cap. 6.
[3] Plato's *Republic*, Book 7.
[4] Plutarch, *Sympos.* viii. and *Life of Marcellus*. The machines of Archytas are also mentioned by Aulus Gellius and Diogenes Laertius.

Digitized by Google

said, was to discipline the mind, not to minister to the base wants of the body. His interference was successful; and from that time, according to Plutarch, the science of mechanics was considered as unworthy of the attention of a philosopher.

Archimedes in a later age imitated and surpassed Archytas. But even Archimedes was not free from the prevailing notion that geometry was degraded by being employed to produce any thing useful. It was with difficulty that he was induced to stoop from speculation to practice. He was half ashamed of those inventions which were the wonder of hostile nations, and always spoke of them slightingly as mere amusements, as trifles in which a mathematician might be suffered to relax his mind after intense application to the higher parts of his science.

The opinion of Bacon on this subject was diametrically opposed to that of the ancient philosophers. He valued geometry chiefly, if not solely, on account of those uses, which to Plato appeared so base. And it is remarkable that the longer Bacon lived the stronger this feeling became. When in 1605 he wrote the two books on the Advancement of Learning, he dwelt on the advantages which mankind derived from mixed mathematics; but he at the same time admitted that the beneficial effect produced by mathematical study on the intellect, though a collateral advantage, was "no less worthy than that which was principal and intended." But it is evident that his views underwent a change. When, near twenty years later, he published the *De Augmentis*, which is the Treatise on the Advancement of Learning, greatly expanded and carefully corrected, he made important alterations in the part which related to mathematics.

Digitized by Google

He condemned with severity the high pretensions of the mathematicians, "delicias et fastum mathematicorum." Assuming the well-being of the human race to be the end of knowledge,[1] he pronounced that mathematical science could claim no higher rank than that of an appendage or an auxiliary to other sciences. Mathematical science, he says, is the handmaid of natural philosophy; she ought to demean herself as such; and he declares that he cannot conceive by what ill chance it has happened that she presumes to claim precedence over her mistress. He predicts — a prediction which would have made Plato shudder — that as more and more discoveries are made in physics, there will be more and more branches of mixed mathematics. Of that collateral advantage the value of which, twenty years before, he rated so highly, he says not one word. This omission cannot have been the effect of mere inadvertence. His own treatise was before him. From that treatise he deliberately expunged whatever was favourable to the study of pure mathematics, and inserted several keen reflections on the ardent votaries of that study. This fact, in our opinion, admits of only one explanation. Bacon's love of those pursuits which directly tend to improve the condition of mankind, and his jealousy of all pursuits merely curious, had grown upon him, and had, it may be, become immoderate. He was afraid of using any expression which might have the effect of inducing any man of talents to employ in speculations, useful only to the mind of the speculator, a single hour which might be employed in extending the empire of man over matter.[2] If Bacon erred here, we

[1] Usui et commodis hominum consulimus.

[2] Compare the passage relating to mathematics in the Second Book of the Advancement of Learning, with the *De Augmentis*, Lib. 3. Cap. 6.

Digitized by Google

must acknowledge that we greatly prefer his error to the opposite error of Plato. We have no patience with a philosophy which, like those Roman matrons who swallowed abortives in order to preserve their shapes, takes pains to be barren for fear of being homely.

Let us pass to astronomy. This was one of the sciences which Plato exhorted his disciples to learn, but for reasons far removed from common habits of thinking. "Shall we set down astronomy," says Socrates, "among the subjects of study?"[1] "I think so," answers his young friend Glaucon: "to know something about the seasons, the months, and the years is of use for military purposes, as well as for agriculture and navigation." "It amuses me," says Socrates, "to see how afraid you are, lest the common herd of people should accuse you of recommending useless studies." He then proceeds, in that pure and magnificent diction which, as Cicero said, Jupiter would use if Jupiter spoke Greek, to explain that the use of astronomy is not to add to the vulgar comforts of life, but to assist in raising the mind to the contemplation of things which are to be perceived by the pure intellect alone. The knowledge of the actual motions of the heavenly bodies Socrates considers as of little value. The appearances which make the sky beautiful at night are, he tells us, like the figures which a geometrician draws on the sand, mere examples, mere helps to feeble minds. We must get beyond them; we must neglect them; we must attain to an astronomy which is as independent of the actual stars as geometrical truth is independent of the lines of an ill-drawn diagram. This is, we imagine, very nearly, if not exactly, the astronomy which Bacon

[1] Plato's *Republic*, Book 7.

Digitized by Google

compared to the ox of Prometheus,[1] a sleek, well-shaped hide, stuffed with rubbish, goodly to look at, but containing nothing to eat. He complained that astronomy had, to its great injury, been separated from natural philosophy, of which it was one of the noblest provinces, and annexed to the domain of mathematics. The world stood in need, he said, of a very different astronomy, of a living astronomy,[2] of an astronomy which should set forth the nature, the motion, and the influences of the heavenly bodies, as they really are.[3]

On the greatest and most useful of all human inventions, the invention of alphabetical writing, Plato did not look with much complacency. He seems to have thought that the use of letters had operated on the human mind as the use of the go-cart in learning to walk, or of corks in learning to swim, is said to operate on the human body. It was a support which, in his opinion, soon became indispensable to those who used it, which made vigorous exertion first unnecessary and then impossible. The powers of the intellect would, he conceived, have been more fully developed without this delusive aid. Men would have been compelled to exercise the understanding and the memory, and, by deep and assiduous meditation, to make truth thoroughly their own. Now, on the contrary, much knowledge is traced on paper, but little is engraved in the soul. A man is certain that he can find information at a moment's notice when he wants it. He therefore suffers it to fade from his mind. Such a man cannot in strict-

[1] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 3. Cap. 4.

[2] Astronomia viva.

[3] "Quæ substantiam et motum et influxum cœlestium, prout re vera sunt proponat." Compare this language with Plato's, "*τὰ δ' ἐν τῷ οὐρανῷ βάσομεν.*"

Digitized by Google

ness be said to know any thing. He has the show without the reality of wisdom. These opinions Plato has put into the mouth of an ancient king of Egypt.[1] But it is evident from the context that they were his own; and so they were understood to be by Quinctilian.[2] Indeed they are in perfect accordance with the whole Platonic system.

Bacon's views, as may easily be supposed, were widely different.[3] The powers of the memory, he observes, without the help of writing, can do little towards the advancement of any useful science. He acknowledges that the memory may be disciplined to such a point as to be able to perform very extraordinary feats. But on such feats he sets little value. The habits of his mind, he tells us, are such that he is not disposed to rate highly any accomplishment, however rare, which is of no practical use to mankind. As to these prodigious achievements of the memory, he ranks them with the exhibitions of rope-dancers and tumblers. "The two performances," he says, "are of much the same sort. The one is an abuse of the powers of the body; the other is an abuse of the powers of the mind. Both may perhaps excite our wonder; but neither is entitled to our respect."

To Plato, the science of medicine appeared to be of very disputable advantage.[4] He did not indeed object to quick cures for acute disorders, or for injuries produced by accidents. But the art which resists the slow sap of a chronic disease, which repairs frames enervated by lust, swollen by gluttony, or inflamed by wine, which encourages sensuality by mitigating the natural punishment of the sensualist, and prolongs ex-

[1] Plato's *Phædrus*.
[2] Quinctilian, XI.
[3] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 5. Cap. 5.
[4] Plato's *Republic*, Book 3.

Digitized by Google

istence when the intellect has ceased to retain its entire energy, had no share of his esteem. A life protracted by medical skill he pronounced to be a long death. The existence of the art of medicine ought, he said, to be tolerated, so far as that art may serve to cure the occasional distempers of men whose constitutions are good. As to those who have bad constitutions, let them die; and the sooner the better. Such men are unfit for war, for magistracy, for the management of their domestic affairs, for severe study and speculation. If they engage in any vigorous mental exercise, they are troubled with giddiness and fulness of the head, all which they lay to the account of philosophy. The best thing that can happen to such wretches is to have done with life at once. He quotes mythical authority in support of this doctrine; and reminds his disciples that the practice of the sons of Æsculapius, as described by Homer, extended only to the cure of external injuries.

Far different was the philosophy of Bacon. Of all the sciences, that which he seems to have regarded with the greatest interest was the science which, in Plato's opinion, would not be tolerated in a well regulated community. To make men perfect was no part of Bacon's plan. His humble aim was to make imperfect men comfortable. The beneficence of his philosophy resembled the beneficence of the common Father, whose sun rises on the evil and the good, whose rain descends for the just and the unjust. In Plato's opinion man was made for philosophy; in Bacon's opinion philosophy was made for man; it was a means to an end; and that end was to increase the pleasures and to mitigate the pains of millions who are not and cannot be philosophers. That a valetudinarian who took great pleasure in being wheeled along his terrace, who relished

Digitized by Google

his boiled chicken and his weak wine and water, and who enjoyed a hearty laugh over the Queen of Navarre's tales, should be treated as a *caput lupinum* because he could not read the Timæus without a headache, was a notion which the humane spirit of the English school of wisdom altogether rejected. Bacon would not have thought it beneath the dignity of a philosopher to contrive an improved garden chair for such a valetudinarian, to devise some way of rendering his medicines more palatable, to invent repasts which he might enjoy, and pillows on which he might sleep soundly; and this though there might not be the smallest hope that the mind of the poor invalid would ever rise to the contemplation of the ideal beautiful and the ideal good. As Plato had cited the religious legends of Greece to justify his contempt for the more recondite parts of the art of healing, Bacon vindicated the dignity of that art by appealing to the example of Christ, and reminded men that the great Physician of the soul did not disdain to be also the physician of the body.[1]

When we pass from the science of medicine to that of legislation, we find the same difference between the systems of these two great men. Plato, at the commencement of the Dialogue on Laws, lays it down as a fundamental principle that the end of legislation is to make men virtuous. It is unnecessary to point out the extravagant conclusions to which such a proposition leads. Bacon well knew to how great an extent the happiness of every society must depend on the virtue of its members; and he also knew what legislators can and what they cannot do for the purpose of promoting virtue. The view which he has given of the end of

[1] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 4. Cap. 2.

Digitized by Google

legislation, and of the principal means for the attainment of that end, has always seemed to us eminently happy, even among the many happy passages of the same kind with which his works abound. "Finis et scopus quem leges intueri atque ad quem jussiones et sanctiones suas dirigere debent, non alius est quam ut cives feliciter degant. Id fiet si pietate et religione recte instituti, moribus honesti, armis adversus hostes externos tuti, legum auxilio adversus seditiones et privatas injurias muniti, imperio et magistratibus obsequentes, copiis et opibus locupletes et florentes fuerint."[1] The end is the well-being of the people. The means are the imparting of moral and religious education; the providing of every thing necessary for defence against foreign enemies; the maintaining of internal order; the establishing of a judicial, financial, and commercial system, under which wealth may be rapidly accumulated and securely enjoyed.

Even with respect to the form in which laws ought to be drawn, there is a remarkable difference of opinion between the Greek and the Englishman. Plato thought a preamble essential; Bacon thought it mischievous. Each was consistent with himself. Plato, considering the moral improvement of the people as the end of legislation, justly inferred that a law which commanded and threatened, but which neither convinced the reason, nor touched the heart, must be a most imperfect law. He was not content with deterring from theft a man who still continued to be a thief at heart, with restraining a son who hated his mother from beating his mother. The only obedience on which he set much value was the obedience which an enlightened

[1] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 8. Cap. 3. Aph. 5.

Digitized by Google

understanding yields to reason, and which a virtuous disposition yields to precepts of virtue. He really seems to have believed that, by prefixing to every law an eloquent and pathetic exhortation, he should, to a great extent, render penal enactments superfluous. Bacon entertained no such romantic hopes; and he well knew the practical inconveniences of the course which Plato recommended. "Neque nobis," says he, "prologi legum qui inepti olim habiti sunt, et leges introducunt disputantes non jubentes, utique placerent, si priscos mores ferre possemus. . . . . Quantum fieri potest prologi evitentur, et lex incipiat a jussione." [1]

Each of the great men whom we have compared intended to illustrate his system by a philosophical romance; and each left his romance imperfect. Had Plato lived to finish the Critias, a comparison between that noble fiction and the new Atlantis would probably have furnished us with still more striking instances than any which we have given. It is amusing to think with what horror he would have seen such an institution as Solomon's House rising in his republic: with what vehemence he would have ordered the brewhouses, the perfume-houses, and the dispensatories to be pulled down; and with what inexorable rigour he would have driven beyond the frontier all the Fellows of the College, Merchants of Light and Depredators, Lamps and Pioneers.

To sum up the whole, we should say that the aim of the Platonic philosophy was to exalt man into a god. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to provide man with what he requires while he continues to be man. The aim of the Platonic philosophy was to raise

[1] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 8. Cap. 8. Aph. 69.

Digitized by Google

us far above vulgar wants. The aim of the Baconian philosophy was to supply our vulgar wants. The former aim was noble; but the latter was attainable. Plato drew a good bow; but, like Acestes in Virgil, he aimed at the stars; and therefore, though there was no want of strength or skill, the shot was thrown away. His arrow was indeed followed by a track of dazzling radiance, but it struck nothing.

> "Volans liquidis in nubibus arsit arundo
> Signavitque viam flammis, tenuisque recessit
> Consumpta in ventos."

Bacon fixed his eye on a mark which was placed on the earth, and within bow-shot, and hit it in the white. The philosophy of Plato began in words and ended in words, noble words indeed, words such as were to be expected from the finest of human intellects exercising boundless dominion over the finest of human languages. The philosophy of Bacon began in observations and ended in arts.

The boast of the ancient philosophers was that their doctrine formed the minds of men to a high degree of wisdom and virtue. This was indeed the only practical good which the most celebrated of those teachers even pretended to effect; and undoubtedly, if they had effected this, they would have deserved far higher praise than if they had discovered the most salutary medicines or constructed the most powerful machines. But the truth is that, in those very matters in which alone they professed to do any good to mankind, in those very matters for the sake of which they neglected all the vulgar interests of mankind, they did nothing, or worse than nothing. They promised what was impracticable; they despised what was practicable; they

Digitized by Google

filled the world with long words and long beards; and they left it as wicked and as ignorant as they found it.

An acre in Middlesex is better than a principality in Utopia. The smallest actual good is better than the most magnificent promises of impossibilities. The wise man of the Stoics would, no doubt, be a grander object than a steam-engine. But there are steam-engines. And the wise man of the Stoics is yet to be born. A philosophy which should enable a man to feel perfectly happy while in agonies of pain would be better than a philosophy which assuages pain. But we know that there are remedies which will assuage pain; and we know that the ancient sages liked the tooth-ache just as little as their neighbours. A philosophy which should extinguish cupidity would be better than a philosophy which should devise laws for the security of property. But it is possible to make laws which shall, to a very great extent, secure property. And we do not understand how any motives which the ancient philosophy furnished could extinguish cupidity. We know indeed that the philosophers were no better than other men. From the testimony of friends as well as of foes, from the confessions of Epictetus and Seneca, as well as from the sneers of Lucian and the fierce invectives of Juvenal, it is plain that these teachers of virtue had all the vices of their neighbours, with the additional vice of hypocrisy. Some people may think the object of the Baconian philosophy a low object, but they cannot deny that, high or low, it has been attained. They cannot deny that every year makes an addition to what Bacon called "fruit." They cannot deny that mankind have made, and are making, great and constant progress in the road which he pointed out to them. Was

Digitized by Google

there any such progressive movement among the ancient philosophers? After they had been declaiming eight hundred years, had they made the world better than when they began? Our belief is that, among the philosophers themselves, instead of a progressive improvement there was a progressive degeneracy. An abject superstition which Democritus or Anaxagoras would have rejected with scorn added the last disgrace to the long dotage of the Stoic and Platonic schools. Those unsuccessful attempts to articulate which are so delightful and interesting in a child shock and disgust us in an aged paralytic; and in the same way, those wild mythological fictions which charm us, when we hear them lisped by Greek poetry in its infancy, excite a mixed sensation of pity and loathing, when mumbled by Greek philosophy in its old age. We know that guns, cutlery, spy-glasses, clocks, are better in our time than they were in the time of our fathers, and were better in the time of our fathers than they were in the time of our grandfathers. We might, therefore, be inclined to think that, when a philosophy which boasted that its object was the elevation and purification of the mind, and which for this object neglected the sordid office of ministering to the comforts of the body, had flourished in the highest honour during many hundreds of years, a vast moral amelioration must have taken place. Was it so? Look at the schools of this wisdom four centuries before the Christian era and four centuries after that era. Compare the men whom those schools formed at those two periods. Compare Plato and Libanius. Compare Pericles and Julian. This philosophy confessed, nay boasted, that for every end but one it was useless. Had it attained that one end?

Digitized by Google

Suppose that Justinian, when he closed the schools of Athens, had called on the last few sages who still haunted the Portico, and lingered round the ancient plane-trees, to show their title to public veneration: suppose that he had said; "A thousand years have elapsed since, in this famous city, Socrates posed Protagoras and Hippias; during those thousand years a large proportion of the ablest men of every generation has been employed in constant efforts to bring to perfection the philosophy which you teach; that philosophy has been munificently patronised by the powerful; its professors have been held in the highest esteem by the public; it has drawn to itself almost all the sap and vigour of the human intellect: and what has it effected? What profitable truth has it taught us which we should not equally have known without it? What has it enabled us to do which we should not have been equally able to do without it?" Such questions, we suspect, would have puzzled Simplicius and Isidore. Ask a follower of Bacon what the new philosophy, as it was called in the time of Charles the Second, has effected for mankind, and his answer is ready; "It has lengthened life; it has mitigated pain; it has extinguished diseases; it has increased the fertility of the soil; it has given new securities to the mariner; it has furnished new arms to the warrior; it has spanned great rivers and estuaries with bridges of form unknown to our fathers; it has guided the thunderbolt innocuously from heaven to earth; it has lighted up the night with the splendour of the day; it has extended the range of the human vision; it has multiplied the power of the human muscles; it has accelerated motion; it has annihilated distance; it has facilitated intercourse, correspondence, all friendly offices, all despatch of business; it has ena-

Digitized by Google

bled man to descend to the depths of the sea, to soar into the air, to penetrate securely into the noxious recesses of the earth, to traverse the land in cars which whirl along without horses, and the ocean in ships which run ten knots an hour against the wind. These are but a part of its fruits, and of its first fruits. For it is a philosophy which never rests, which has never attained, which is never perfect. Its law is progress. A point which yesterday was invisible is its goal to-day, and will be its starting-post to-morrow."

Great and various as the powers of Bacon were, he owes his wide and durable fame chiefly to this, that all those powers received their direction from common sense. His love of the vulgar useful, his strong sympathy with the popular notions of good and evil, and the openness with which he avowed that sympathy, are the secret of his influence. There was in his system no cant, no illusion. He had no anointing for broken bones, no fine theories *de finibus*, no arguments to persuade men out of their senses. He knew that men, and philosophers as well as other men, do actually love life, health, comfort, honour, security, the society of friends, and do actually dislike death, sickness, pain, poverty, disgrace, danger, separation from those to whom they are attached. He knew that religion, though it often regulates and moderates these feelings, seldom eradicates them; nor did he think it desirable for mankind that they should be eradicated. The plan of eradicating them by conceits like those of Seneca, or syllogisms like those of Chrysippus, was too preposterous to be for a moment entertained by a mind like his. He did not understand what wisdom there could be in changing names where it was impossible to change things; in denying that blindness, hunger, the gout,

Digitized by Google

the rack, were evils, and calling them ἀποπροηγμένα; in refusing to acknowledge that health, safety, plenty, were good things, and dubbing them by the name of ἀδιάφορα. In his opinions on all these subjects, he was not a Stoic, nor an Epicurean, nor an Academic, but what would have been called by Stoics, Epicureans, and Academics a mere ἰδιώτης, a mere common man. And it was precisely because he was so that his name makes so great an era in the history of the world. It was because he dug deep that he was able to pile high. It was because, in order to lay his foundations, he went down into those parts of human nature which lie low, but which are not liable to change, that the fabric which he reared has risen to so stately an elevation, and stands with such immovable strength.

We have sometimes thought that an amusing fiction might be written, in which a disciple of Epictetus and a disciple of Bacon should be introduced as fellow-travellers. They come to a village where the small-pox has just begun to rage, and find houses shut up, intercourse suspended, the sick abandoned, mothers weeping in terror over their children. The Stoic assures the dismayed population that there is nothing bad in the small-pox, and that to a wise man, disease, deformity, death, the loss of friends, are not evils. The Baconian takes out a lancet and begins to vaccinate. They find a body of miners in great dismay. An explosion of noisome vapours has just killed many of those who were at work; and the survivors are afraid to venture into the cavern. The Stoic assures them that such an accident is nothing but a mere ἀποπροηγμένον. The Baconian, who has no such fine word at his command, contents himself with devising a safety-lamp. They find a shipwrecked merchant wringing his hands on the shore.

Digitized by Google

His vessel with an inestimable cargo has just gone down, and he is reduced in a moment from opulence to beggary. The Stoic exhorts him not to seek happiness in things which lie without himself, and repeats the whole chapter of Epictetus *πρὸς τοὺς τὴν ἀπορίαν δεδοικότας*. The Baconian constructs a diving-bell, goes down in it, and returns with the most precious effects from the wreck. It would be easy to multiply illustrations of the difference between the philosophy of thorns and the philosophy of fruit, the philosophy of words and the philosophy of works.

Bacon has been accused of overrating the importance of those sciences which minister to the physical well-being of man, and of underrating the importance of moral philosophy; and it cannot be denied that persons who read the *Novum Organum* and the *De Augmentis*, without adverting to the circumstances under which those works were written, will find much that may seem to countenance the accusation. It is certain, however, that though in practice he often went very wrong, and though, as his historical work and his essays prove, he did not hold, even in theory, very strict opinions on points of political morality, he was far too wise a man not to know how much our well-being depends on the regulation of our minds. The world for which he wished was not, as some people seem to imagine, a world of water-wheels, power-looms, steam-carriages, sensualists, and knaves. He would have been as ready as Zeno himself to maintain that no bodily comforts which could be devised by the skill and labour of a hundred generations would give happiness to a man whose mind was under the tyranny of licentious appetite, of envy, of hatred, or of fear. If he sometimes appeared to ascribe importance

Digitized by Google

too exclusively to the arts which increase the outward comforts of our species, the reason is plain. Those arts had been most unduly depreciated. They had been represented as unworthy the attention of a man of liberal education. "Cogitavit," says Bacon of himself, "eam esse opinionem sive æstimationem humidam et damnosam, minui nempe majestatem mentis humanæ, si in experimentis et rebus particularibus, sensui subjectis, et in materia terminatis, diu ac multum versetur: præsertim cum hujusmodi res ad inquirendum laboriosæ ad meditandum ignobiles, ad discendum asperæ, ad practicam illiberales, numero infinitæ, et subtilitate pusillæ videri soleant, et ob hujusmodi conditiones, gloriæ artium minus sint accommodatæ." [1] This opinion seemed to him "omnia in familia humana turbasse." It had undoubtedly caused many arts which were of the greatest utility, and which were susceptible of the greatest improvements, to be neglected by speculators, and abandoned to joiners, masons, smiths, weavers, apothecaries. It was necessary to assert the dignity of those arts, to bring them prominently forward, to proclaim that, as they have a most serious effect on human happiness, they are not unworthy of the attention of the highest human intellects. Again, it was by illustrations drawn from these arts that Bacon could most easily illustrate his principles. It was by improvements effected in these arts that the soundness of his principles could be most speedily and decisively brought to the test, and made manifest to common understandings. He acted like a wise commander who thins every other

[1] *Cogitata et Visa.* The expression *opinio humida* may surprise a reader not accustomed to Bacon's style. The allusion is to the maxim of Heraclitus the obscure: "Dry light is the best." By dry light, Bacon understood the light of the intellect, not obscured by the mists of passion, interest, or prejudice.

Digitized by Google

part of his line to strengthen a point where the enemy is attacking with peculiar fury, and on the fate of which the event of the battle seems likely to depend. In the *Novum Organum*, however, he distinctly and most truly declares that his philosophy is no less a Moral than a Natural Philosophy, that, though his illustrations are drawn from physical science, the principles which those illustrations are intended to explain are just as applicable to ethical and political inquiries as to inquiries into the nature of heat and vegetation.[1]

He frequently treated of moral subjects; and he brought to those subjects that spirit which was the essence of his whole system. He has left us many admirable practicable observations on what he somewhat quaintly called the Georgics of the mind, on the mental culture which tends to produce good dispositions. Some persons, he said, might accuse him of spending labour on a matter so simple that his predecessors had passed it by with contempt. He desired such persons to remember that he had from the first announced the objects of his search to be not the splendid and the surprising, but the useful and the true, not the deluding dreams which go forth through the shining portal of ivory, but the humbler realities of the gate of horn.[2]

True to this principle, he indulged in no rants about the fitness of things, the all-sufficiency of virtue, and the dignity of human nature. He dealt not at all in resounding nothings, such as those with which Bolingbroke pretended to comfort himself in exile, and in which Cicero vainly sought consolation after the loss of Tullia. The casuistical subtilties which occupied the

[1] *Novum Organum*, Lib. 1. Aph. 127.
[2] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 7. Cap. 3.

Digitized by Google

attention of the keenest spirits of his age had, it should seem, no attractions for him. The doctors whom Escobar afterwards compared to the four beasts and the four-and-twenty elders in the Apocalypse Bacon dismissed with most contemptuous brevity. "Inanes plerumque evadunt et futiles." [1] Nor did he ever meddle with those enigmas which have puzzled hundreds of generations, and will puzzle hundreds more. He said nothing about the grounds of moral obligation, or the freedom of the human will. He had no inclination to employ himself in labours resembling those of the damned in the Grecian Tartarus, to spin for ever on the same wheel round the same pivot, to gape for ever after the same deluding clusters, to pour water for ever into the same bottomless buckets, to pace for ever to and fro on the same wearisome path after the same recoiling stone. He exhorted his disciples to prosecute researches of a very different description, to consider moral science as a practical science, a science of which the object was to cure the diseases and perturbations of the mind, and which could be improved only by a method analogous to that which has improved medicine and surgery. Moral philosophers ought, he said, to set themselves vigorously to work for the purpose of discovering what are the actual effects produced on the human character by particular modes of education, by the indulgence of particular habits, by the study of particular books, by society, by emulation, by imitation. Then we might hope to find out what mode of training was most likely to preserve and restore moral health.[2]

What he was as a natural philosopher and a moral philosopher, that he was also as a theologian. He was,

[1] *Ib.*, Lib. 7. Cap. 2. [2] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 7. Cap. 3.

Digitized by Google

we are convinced, a sincere believer in the divine authority of the Christian revelation. Nothing can be found in his writings, or in any other writings, more eloquent and pathetic than some passages which were apparently written under the influence of strong devotional feeling. He loved to dwell on the power of the Christian religion to effect much that the ancient philosophers could only promise. He loved to consider that religion as the bond of charity, the curb of evil passions, the consolation of the wretched, the support of the timid, the hope of the dying. But controversies on speculative points of theology seem to have engaged scarcely any portion of his attention. In what he wrote on Church Government he showed, as far as he dared, a tolerant and charitable spirit. He troubled himself not at all about Homoousians and Homoiousians, Monothelites and Nestorians. He lived in an age in which disputes on the most subtle points of divinity excited an intense interest throughout Europe, and nowhere more than in England. He was placed in the very thick of the conflict. He was in power at the time of the Synod of Dort, and must for months have been daily deafened with talk about election, reprobation, and final perseverance. Yet we do not remember a line in his works from which it can be inferred that he was either a Calvinist or an Arminian. While the world was resounding with the noise of a disputatious philosophy and a disputatious theology, the Baconian school, like Alworthy seated between Square and Thwackum, preserved a calm neutrality, half scornful, half benevolent, and, content with adding to the sum of practical good, left the war of words to those who liked it.

We have dwelt long on the end of the Baconian

Digitized by Google

philosophy, because from this peculiarity all the other peculiarities of that philosophy necessarily arose. Indeed, scarcely any person who proposed to himself the same end with Bacon could fail to hit upon the same means.

The vulgar notion about Bacon we take to be this, that he invented a new method of arriving at truth, which method is called Induction, and that he detected some fallacy in the syllogistic reasoning which had been in vogue before his time. This notion is about as well founded as that of the people who, in the middle ages, imagined that Virgil was a great conjurer. Many who are far too well informed to talk such extravagant nonsense entertain what we think incorrect notions as to what Bacon really effected in this matter.

The inductive method has been practised ever since the beginning of the world by every human being. It is constantly practised by the most ignorant clown, by the most thoughtless schoolboy, by the very child at the breast. That method leads the clown to the conclusion that if he sows barley he shall not reap wheat. By that method the schoolboy learns that a cloudy day is the best for catching trout. The very infant, we imagine, is led by induction to expect milk from his mother or nurse, and none from his father.

Not only is it not true that Bacon invented the inductive method; but it is not true that he was the first person who correctly analysed that method and explained its uses. Aristotle had long before pointed out the absurdity of supposing that syllogistic reasoning could ever conduct men to the discovery of any new principle, had shown that such discoveries must be made by induction, and by induction alone, and had given the history of the inductive process, concisely indeed, but with great perspicuity and precision.

Digitized by Google

Again, we are not inclined to ascribe much practical value to that analysis of the inductive method which Bacon has given in the second book of the *Novum Organum*. It is indeed an elaborate and correct analysis. But it is an analysis of that which we are all doing from morning to night, and which we continue to do even in our dreams. A plain man finds his stomach out of order. He never heard Lord Bacon's name. But he proceeds in the strictest conformity with the rules laid down in the second book of the *Novum Organum*, and satisfies himself that minced pies have done the mischief. "I ate minced pies on Monday and Wednesday, and I was kept awake by indigestion all night." This is the *comparentia ad intellectum instantiarum convenientium*. "I did not eat any on Tuesday and Friday, and I was quite well." This is the *comparentia instantiarum in proximo quæ natura data privantur*. "I ate very sparingly of them on Sunday, and was very slightly indisposed in the evening. But on Christmas-day I almost dined on them, and was so ill that I was in great danger." This is the *comparentia instantiarum secundum magis et minus*. "It cannot have been the brandy which I took with them. For I have drunk brandy daily for years without being the worse for it." This is the *rejectio naturarum*. Our invalid then proceeds to what is termed by Bacon the *Vindemiatio*, and pronounces that minced pies do not agree with him.

We repeat that we dispute neither the ingenuity nor the accuracy of the theory contained in the second book of the *Novum Organum;* but we think that Bacon greatly overrated its utility. We conceive that the inductive process, like many other processes, is not likely to be better performed merely because men know

Digitized by Google

how they perform it. William Tell would not have been one whit more likely to cleave the apple if he had known that his arrow would describe a parabola under the influence of the attraction of the earth. Captain Barclay would not have been more likely to walk a thousand miles in a thousand hours, if he had known the place and name of every muscle in his legs. Monsieur Jourdain probably did not pronounce D and F more correctly after he had been apprised that D is pronounced by touching the teeth with the end of the tongue, and F by putting the upper teeth on the lower lip. We cannot perceive that the study of Grammar makes the smallest difference in the speech of people who have always lived in good society. Not one Londoner in ten thousand can lay down the rules for the proper use of *will* and *shall*. Yet not one Londoner in a million ever misplaces his *will* and *shall*. Doctor Robertson could, undoubtedly, have written a luminous dissertation on the use of those words. Yet, even in his latest work, he sometimes misplaced them ludicrously. No man uses figures of speech with more propriety because he knows that one figure is called a metonymy and another a synecdoche. A drayman in a passion calls out, "You are a pretty fellow," without suspecting that he is uttering irony, and that irony is one of the four primary tropes. The old systems of rhetoric were never regarded by the most experienced and discerning judges as of any use for the purpose of forming an orator. "Ego hanc vim intelligo," said Cicero, "esse in præceptis omnibus, non ut ea secuti oratores eloquentiæ laudem sint adepti, sed quæ sua sponte homines eloquentes facerent, ea quosdam observasse, atque id egisse; sic esse non eloquentiam ex artificio, sed artificium ex eloquentia natum." We must own that we

Digitized by Google

entertain the same opinion concerning the study of Logic which Cicero entertained concerning the study of Rhetoric. A man of sense syllogizes in *celarent* and *sesare* all day long without suspecting it; and, though he may not know what an *ignoratio elenchi* is, has no difficulty in exposing it whenever he falls in with it; which is likely to be as often as he falls in with a Reverend Master of Arts nourished on mode and figure in the cloisters of Oxford. Considered merely as an intellectual feat, the *Organum* of Aristotle can scarcely be admired too highly. But the more we compare individual with individual, school with school, nation with nation, generation with generation, the more do we lean to the opinion that the knowledge of the theory of logic has no tendency whatever to make men good reasoners.

What Aristotle did for the syllogistic process Bacon has, in the second book of the *Novum Organum*, done for the inductive process; that is to say, he has analysed it well. His rules are quite proper; but we do not need them, because they are drawn from our own constant practice.

But, though everybody is constantly performing the process described in the second book of the *Novum Organum*, some men perform it well and some perform it ill. Some are led by it to truth, and some to error. It led Franklin to discover the nature of lightning. It led thousands, who had less brains than Franklin, to believe in animal magnetism. But this was not because Franklin went through the process described by Bacon, and the dupes of Mesmer through a different process. The *comparentiæ* and *rejectiones* of which we have given examples will be found in the most unsound inductions. We have heard that an eminent judge of

Digitized by Google

the last generation was in the habit of jocosely propounding after dinner a theory, that the cause of the prevalence of Jacobinism was the practice of bearing three names. He quoted on the one side Charles James Fox, Richard Brinsley Sheridan, John Horne Tooke, John Philpot Curran, Samuel Taylor Coleridge, Theobald Wolfe Tone. These were *instantiæ convenientes*. He then proceeded to cite instances *absentiæ in proximo*, William Pitt, John Scott, William Windham, Samuel Horsley, Henry Dundas, Edmund Burke. He might have gone on to instances *secundum magis et minus*. The practice of giving children three names has been for some time a growing practice, and Jacobinism has also been growing. The practice of giving children three names is more common in America than in England. In England we still have a King and a House of Lords; but the Americans are republicans. The *rejectiones* are obvious. Burke and Theobald Wolfe Tone are both Irishmen; therefore the being an Irishman is not the cause of Jacobinism. Horsley and Horne Tooke are both clergymen; therefore the being a clergyman is not the cause of Jacobinism. Fox and Windham were both educated at Oxford; therefore the being educated at Oxford is not the cause of Jacobinism. Pitt and Horne Tooke were both educated at Cambridge; therefore the being educated at Cambridge is not the cause of Jacobinism. In this way, our inductive philosopher arrives at what Bacon calls the Vintage, and pronounces that the having three names is the cause of Jacobinism.

Here is an induction corresponding with Bacon's analysis and ending in a monstrous absurdity. In what then does this induction differ from the induction which leads us to the conclusion that the presence

Digitized by Google

of the sun is the cause of our having more light by day than by night? The difference evidently is not in the kind of instances, but in the number of instances; that is to say, the difference is not in that part of the process for which Bacon has given precise rules, but in a circumstance for which no precise rule can possibly be given. If the learned author of the theory about Jacobinism had enlarged either of his tables a little, his system would have been destroyed. The names of Tom Paine and William Wyndham Grenville would have been sufficient to do the work.

It appears to us, then, that the difference between a sound and unsound induction does not lie in this, that the author of the sound induction goes through the process analysed in the second book of the *Novum Organum*, and the author of the unsound induction through a different process. They both perform the same process. But one performs it foolishly or carelessly; the other performs it with patience, attention, sagacity, and judgment. Now precepts can do little towards making men patient and attentive, and still less towards making them sagacious and judicious. It is very well to tell men to be on their guard against prejudices, not to believe facts on slight evidence, not to be content with a scanty collection of facts, to put out of their minds the *idola* which Bacon has so finely described. But these rules are too general to be of much practical use. The question is, What is a prejudice? How long does the incredulity with which I hear a new theory propounded continue to be a wise and salutary incredulity? When does it become an *idolum specus*, the unreasonable pertinacity of a too sceptical mind? What is slight evidence? What collection of facts is scanty? Will ten instances do, or fifty, or a hundred? In how many

Digitized by Google

months would the first human beings who settled on the shores of the ocean have been justified in believing that the moon had an influence on the tides? After how many experiments would Jenner have been justified in believing that he had discovered a safeguard against the small-pox? These are questions to which it would be most desirable to have a precise answer; but unhappily they are questions to which no precise answer can be returned.

We think then that it is possible to lay down accurate rules, as Bacon has done, for the performing of that part of the inductive process which all men perform alike; but that these rules, though accurate, are not wanted, because in truth they only tell us to do what we are all doing. We think that it is impossible to lay down any precise rule for the performing of that part of the inductive process which a great experimental philosopher performs in one way, and a superstitious old woman in another.

On this subject, we think, Bacon was in an error. He certainly attributed to his rules a value which did not belong to them. He went so far as to say, that, if his method of making discoveries were adopted, little would depend on the degree of force or acuteness of any intellect; that all minds would be reduced to one level, that his philosophy resembled a compass or a rule which equalises all hands, and enables the most unpractised person to draw a more correct circle or line than the best draughtsmen can produce without such aid.[1] This really seems to us as extravagant as it would have been in Lindley Murray to announce that everybody who should learn his Grammar would write as good English as Dryden, or in that very able writer,

[1] *Novum Organum*, Præf. and Lib. 1. Aph. 123.

Digitized by Google

the Archbishop of Dublin, to promise that all the readers of his Logic would reason like Chillingworth, and that all the readers of his Rhetoric would speak like Burke. That Bacon was altogether mistaken as to this point will now hardly be disputed. His philosophy has flourished during two hundred years, and has produced none of this levelling. The interval between a man of talents and a dunce is as wide as ever; and is never more clearly discernible than when they engage in researches which require the constant use of induction.

It will be seen that we do not consider Bacon's ingenious analysis of the inductive method as a very useful performance. Bacon was not, as we have already said, the inventor of the inductive method. He was not even the person who first analysed the inductive method correctly, though he undoubtedly analysed it more minutely than any who preceded him. He was not the person who first showed that by the inductive method alone new truth could be discovered. But he was the person who first turned the minds of speculative men, long occupied in verbal disputes, to the discovery of new and useful truth; and, by doing so, he at once gave to the inductive method an importance and dignity which had never before belonged to it. He was not the maker of that road; he was not the discoverer of that road; he was not the person who first surveyed and mapped that road. But he was the person who first called the public attention to an inexhaustible mine of wealth, which had been utterly neglected, and which was accessible by that road alone. By doing so, he caused that road, which had previously been trodden only by peasants and higglers, to be frequented by a higher class of travellers.

That which was eminently his own in his system

Digitized by Google

was the end which he proposed to himself. The end being given, the means, as it appears to us, could not well be mistaken. If others had aimed at the same object with Bacon, we hold it to be certain that they would have employed the same method with Bacon. It would have been hard to convince Seneca that the inventing of a safety-lamp was an employment worthy of a philosopher. It would have been hard to persuade Thomas Aquinas to descend from the making of syllogisms to the making of gunpowder. But Seneca would never have doubted for a moment that it was only by means of a series of experiments that a safety-lamp could be invented. Thomas Aquinas would never have thought that his *barbara* and *baralipton* would enable him to ascertain the proportion which charcoal ought to bear to saltpetre in a pound of gunpowder. Neither common sense nor Aristotle would have suffered him to fall into such an absurdity.

By stimulating men to the discovery of new truth, Bacon stimulated them to employ the inductive method, the only method, even the ancient philosophers and the schoolmen themselves being judges, by which new truth can be discovered. By stimulating men to the discovery of useful truth, he furnished them with a motive to perform the inductive process well and carefully. His predecessors had been, in his phrase, not interpreters, but anticipators of nature. They had been content with the first principles at which they had arrived by the most scanty and slovenly induction. And why was this? It was, we conceive, because their philosophy proposed to itself no practical end, because it was merely an exercise of the mind. A man who wants to contrive a new machine or a new medicine has a strong motive to observe accurately and

Digitized by Google

patiently, and to try experiment after experiment. But a man who merely wants a theme for disputation or declamation has no such motive. He is therefore content with premises grounded on assumption, or on the most scanty and hasty induction. Thus, we conceive, the schoolmen acted. On their foolish premises they often argued with great ability; and as their object was "assensum subjugare, non res,"[1] to be victorious in controversy, not to be victorious over nature, they were consistent. For just as much logical skill could be shown in reasoning on false as on true premises. But the followers of the new philosophy, proposing to themselves the discovery of useful truth as their object, must have altogether failed of attaining that object if they had been content to build theories on superficial induction.

Bacon has remarked[2] that in ages when philosophy was stationary, the mechanical arts went on improving. Why was this? Evidently because the mechanic was not content with so careless a mode of induction as served the purpose of the philosopher. And why was the philosopher more easily satisfied than the mechanic? Evidently because the object of the mechanic was to mould things, whilst the object of the philosopher was only to mould words. Careful induction is not at all necessary to the making of a good syllogism. But it is indispensable to the making of a good shoe. Mechanics, therefore, have always been, as far as the range of their humble but useful callings extended, not anticipators but interpreters of nature. And when a philosophy arose, the object of which was to do on a large scale what the mechanic does on a small scale, to

[1] *Novum Organum*, Lib. 1. Aph. 29.
[2] *De Augmentis*, Lib. 1.

Digitized by Google

extend the power and to supply the wants of man, the truth of the premises, which logically is a matter altogether unimportant, became a matter of the highest importance; and the careless induction with which men of learning had previously been satisfied gave place, of necessity, to an induction far more accurate and satisfactory.

What Bacon did for inductive philosophy may, we think, be fairly stated thus. The objects of preceding speculators were objects which could be attained without careful induction. Those speculators, therefore, did not perform the inductive process carefully. Bacon stirred up men to pursue an object which could be attained only by induction, and by induction carefully performed; and consequently induction was more carefully performed. We do not think that the importance of what Bacon did for inductive philosophy has ever been overrated. But we think that the nature of his services is often mistaken, and was not fully understood even by himself. It was not by furnishing philosophers with rules for performing the inductive process well, but by furnishing them with a motive for performing it well, that he conferred so vast a benefit on society.

To give to the human mind a direction which it shall retain for ages is the rare prerogative of a few imperial spirits. It cannot, therefore, be uninteresting to inquire what was the moral and intellectual constitution which enabled Bacon to exercise so vast an influence on the world.

In the temper of Bacon, — we speak of Bacon the philosopher, not of Bacon the lawyer and politician, — there was a singular union of audacity and sobriety. The promises which he made to mankind might, to a superficial reader, seem to resemble the rants which a

Digitized by Google

great dramatist has put into the mouth of an Oriental conqueror half-crazed by good fortune and by violent passions.

> "He shall have chariots easier than air,
> Which I will have invented; and thyself
> That art the messenger shall ride before him,
> On a horse cut out of an entire diamond,
> That shall be made to go with golden wheels,
> I know not how yet."

But Bacon performed what he promised. In truth, Fletcher would not have dared to make Arbaces promise, in his wildest fits of excitement, the tithe of what the Baconian philosophy has performed.

The true philosophical temperament may, we think, be described in four words, much hope, little faith; a disposition to believe that any thing, however extraordinary, may be done; an indisposition to believe that any thing extraordinary has been done. In these points the constitution of Bacon's mind seems to us to have been absolutely perfect. He was at once the Mammon and the Surly of his friend Ben. Sir Epicure did not indulge in visions more magnificent and gigantic. Surly did not sift evidence with keener and more sagacious incredulity.

Closely connected with this peculiarity of Bacon's temper was a striking peculiarity of his understanding. With great minuteness of observation he had an amplitude of comprehension such as has never yet been vouchsafed to any other human being. The small fine mind of Labruyère had not a more delicate tact than the large intellect of Bacon. The Essays contain abundant proofs that no nice feature of character, no peculiarity in the ordering of a house, a garden, or a court-masque, could escape the notice of one whose

Digitized by Google

mind was capable of taking in the whole world of knowledge. His understanding resembled the tent which the fairy Paribanou gave to Prince Ahmed. Fold it; and it seemed a toy for the hand of a lady. Spread it; and the armies of powerful Sultans might repose beneath its shade.

In keenness of observation he has been equalled, though perhaps never surpassed. But the largeness of his mind was all his own. The glance with which he surveyed the intellectual universe resembled that which the Archangel, from the golden threshold of heaven, darted down into the new creation.

> 'Round he surveyed, — and well might, where he stood
> So high above the circling canopy
> Of night's extended shade, — from eastern point
> Of Libra, to the fleecy star which bears
> Andromeda far off Atlantic seas
> Beyond the horizon."

His knowledge differed from that of other men, as a terrestrial globe differs from an Atlas which contains a different country on every leaf. The towns and roads of England, France, and Germany are better laid down in the Atlas than on the globe. But while we are looking at England we see nothing of France; and while we are looking at France we see nothing of Germany. We may go to the Atlas to learn the bearings and distances of York and Bristol, or of Dresden and Prague. But it is useless if we want to know the bearings and distances of France and Martinique, or of England and Canada. On the globe we shall not find all the market towns in our own neighbourhood; but we shall learn from it the comparative extent and the relative position of all the kingdoms of the earth. "I have taken," said Bacon, in a letter

Digitized by Google

written when he was only thirty-one, to his uncle Lord Burleigh, "I have taken all knowledge to be my province." In any other young man, indeed in any other man, this would have been a ridiculous flight of presumption. There have been thousands of better mathematicians, astronomers, chemists, physicians, botanists, mineralogists, than Bacon. No man would go to Bacon's works to learn any particular science or art, any more than he would go to a twelve-inch globe in order to find his way from Kennington turnpike to Clapham Common. The art which Bacon taught was the art of inventing arts. The knowledge in which Bacon excelled all men was a knowledge of the mutual relations of all departments of knowledge.

The mode in which he communicated his thoughts was peculiar to him. He had no touch of that disputatious temper which he often censured in his predecessors. He effected a vast intellectual revolution in opposition to a vast mass of prejudices; yet he never engaged in any controversy: nay, we cannot at present recollect, in all his philosophical works, a single passage of a controversial character. All those works might with propriety have been put into the form which he adopted in the work entitled *Cogitata et visa*: "Franciscus Baconus sic cogitavit." These are thoughts which have occurred to me: weigh them well: and take them or leave them.

Borgia said of the famous expedition of Charles the Eighth, that the French had conquered Italy, not with steel, but with chalk; for that the only exploit which they had found necessary for the purpose of taking military occupation of any place had been to mark the doors of the houses where they meant to quarter. Bacon often quoted this saying, and loved to apply it

Digitized by Google

to the victories of his own intellect.[1] His philosophy, he said, came as a guest, not as an enemy. She found no difficulty in gaining admittance, without a contest, into every understanding fitted, by its structure and by its capacity, to receive her. In all this we think that he acted most judiciously; first, because, as he has himself remarked, the difference between his school and other schools was a difference so fundamental that there was hardly any common ground on which a controversial battle could be fought; and, secondly, because his mind, eminently observant, preëminently discursive and capacious, was, we conceive, neither formed by nature nor disciplined by habit for dialectical combat.

Though Bacon did not arm his philosophy with the weapons of logic, he adorned her profusely with all the richest decorations of rhetoric. His eloquence, though not untainted with the vicious taste of his age, would alone have entitled him to a high rank in literature. He had a wonderful talent for packing thought close, and rendering it portable. In wit, if by wit be meant the power of perceiving analogies between things which appear to have nothing in common, he never had an equal, not even Cowley, not even the author of Hudibras. Indeed, he possessed this faculty, or rather this faculty possessed him, to a morbid degree. When he abandoned himself to it without reserve, as he did in the *Sapientia Veterum*, and at the end of the second book of the *De Augmentis*, the feats which he performed were not merely admirable, but portentous, and almost shocking. On these occasions we marvel at him as clowns on a fair-day marvel at a juggler, and can hardly help thinking that the devil must be in him.

[1] *Novum Organum*, Lib. 1. Aph. 35. and elsewhere.

Digitized by Google

These, however, were freaks in which his ingenuity now and then wantoned, with scarcely any other object than to astonish and amuse. But it occasionally happened that, when he was engaged in grave and profound investigations, his wit obtained the mastery over all his other faculties, and led him into absurdities into which no dull man could possibly have fallen. We will give the most striking instance which at present occurs to us. In the third book of the *De Augmentis* he tells us that there are some principles which are not peculiar to one science, but are common to several. That part of philosophy which concerns itself with these principles is, in his nomenclature, designated as *philosophia prima*. He then proceeds to mention some of the principles with which this *philosophia prima* is conversant. One of them is this. An infectious disease is more likely to be communicated while it is in progress than when it has reached its height. This, says he, is true in medicine. It is also true in morals; for we see that the example of very abandoned men injures public morality less than the example of men in whom vice has not yet extinguished all good qualities. Again, he tells us that in music a discord ending in a concord is agreeable, and that the same thing may be noted in the affections. Once more, he tells us, that in physics the energy with which a principle acts is often increased by the antiperistasis of its opposite; and that it is the same in the contests of factions. If the making of ingenious and sparkling similitudes like these be indeed the *philosophia prima*, we are quite sure that the greatest philosophical work of the nineteenth century is Mr. Moore's Lalla Rookh. The similitudes which we have cited are very happy similitudes. But that a man like Bacon should have taken them for more, that he should have thought the

Digitized by Google

discovery of such resemblances as these an important part of philosophy, has always appeared to us one of the most singular facts in the history of letters.

The truth is that his mind was wonderfully quick in perceiving analogies of all sorts. But, like several eminent men whom we could name, both living and dead, he sometimes appeared strangely deficient in the power of distinguishing rational from fanciful analogies, analogies which are arguments from analogies which are mere illustrations, analogies like that which Bishop Butler so ably pointed out, between natural and revealed religion, from analogies like that which Addison discovered, between the series of Grecian gods carved by Phidias and the series of English kings painted by Kneller. This want of discrimination has led to many strange political speculations. Sir William Temple deduced a theory of government from the properties of the pyramid. Mr. Southey's whole system of finance is grounded on the phænomena of evaporation and rain. In theology, this perverted ingenuity has made still wilder work. From the time of Irenæus and Origen down to the present day, there has not been a single generation in which great divines have not been led into the most absurd expositions of Scripture, by mere incapacity to distinguish analogies proper, to use the scholastic phrase, from analogies metaphorical.[1] It is curious that Bacon has himself mentioned this very kind of delusion among the *idola specus;* and has mentioned in language which, we are inclined to think, shows that he knew himself to be subject to it. It is the vice, he tells us, of subtle minds to attach too much importance to slight distinctions; it is the vice, on the other hand, of high and dis-

[1] See some interesting remarks on this subject in Bishop Berkeley's Minute Philosopher, Dialogue IV.

Digitized by Google

cursive intellects to attach too much importance to slight resemblances; and he adds that, when this last propensity is indulged to excess, it leads men to catch at shadows instead of substances.[1]

Yet we cannot wish that Bacon's wit had been less luxuriant. For, to say nothing of the pleasure which it affords, it was in the vast majority of cases employed for the purpose of making obscure truth plain, of making repulsive truth attractive, of fixing in the mind forever truth which might otherwise have left but a transient impression.

The poetical faculty was powerful in Bacon's mind, but not, like his wit, so powerful as occasionally to usurp the place of his reason, and to tyrannize over the whole man. No imagination was ever at once so strong and so thoroughly subjugated. It never stirred but at a signal from good sense. It stopped at the first check from good sense. Yet, though disciplined to such obedience, it gave noble proofs of its vigour. In truth, much of Bacon's life was passed in a visionary world, amidst things as strange as any that are described in the Arabian Tales, or in those romances on which the curate and barber of Don Quixote's village performed so cruel an *auto-de-fe*, amidst buildings more sumptuous than the palace of Aladdin, fountains more wonderful than the golden water of Parizade, conveyances more rapid than the hippogryph of Ruggiero, arms more formidable than the lance of Astolfo, remedies more efficacious than the balsam of Fierabras. Yet in his magnificent day-dreams there was nothing wild, nothing but what sober reason sanctioned. He knew that all the secrets feigned by poets to have been written in the books of enchanters are worthless when compared

[1] *Novum Organum*, Lib. 1. Aph. 55.

Digitized by Google

with the mighty secrets which are really written in the book of nature, and which, with time and patience, will be read there. He knew that all the wonders wrought by all the talismans in fable were trifles when compared to the wonders which might reasonably be expected from the philosophy of fruit, and that, if his words sank deep into the minds of men, they would produce effects such as superstition had never ascribed to the incantations of Merlin and Michael Scot. It was here that he loved to let his imagination loose. He loved to picture to himself the world as it would be when his philosophy should, in his own noble phrase, "have enlarged the bounds of human empire."[1] We might refer to many instances. But we will content ourselves with the strongest, the description of the House of Solomon in the New Atlantis. By most of Bacon's contemporaries, and by some people of our time, this remarkable passage would, we doubt not, be considered as an ingenious rodomontade, a counterpart to the adventures of Sinbad or Baron Munchausen. The truth is, that there is not to be found in any human composition a passage more eminently distinguished by profound and serene wisdom. The boldness and originality of the fiction is far less wonderful than the nice discernment which carefully excluded from that long list of prodigies every thing that can be pronounced impossible, every thing that can be proved to lie beyond the mighty magic of induction and of time. Already some parts, and not the least startling parts, of this glorious prophecy have been accomplished, even according to the letter; and the whole, construed according to the spirit, is daily accomplishing all around us.

One of the most remarkable circumstances in the

[1] New Atlantis.

Digitized by Google

history of Bacon's mind is the order in which its powers expanded themselves. With him the fruit came first and remained till the last; the blossoms did not appear till late. In general, the development of the fancy is to the development of the judgment what the growth of a girl is to the growth of a boy. The fancy attains at an earlier period to the perfection of its beauty, its power, and its fruitfulness; and, as it is first to ripen, it is also first to fade. It has generally lost something of its bloom and freshness before the sterner faculties have reached maturity; and is commonly withered and barren while those faculties still retain all their energy. It rarely happens that the fancy and the judgment grow together. It happens still more rarely that the judgment grows faster than the fancy. This seems, however, to have been the case with Bacon. His boyhood and youth appear to have been singularly sedate. His gigantic scheme of philosophical reform is said by some writers to have been planned before he was fifteen, and was undoubtedly planned while he was still young. He observed as vigilantly, meditated as deeply, and judged as temperately when he gave his first work to the world as at the close of his long career. But in eloquence, in sweetness and variety of expression, and in richness of illustration, his later writings are far superior to those of his youth. In this respect the history of his mind bears some resemblance to the history of the mind of Burke. The treatise on the Sublime and Beautiful, though written on a subject which the coldest metaphysician could hardly treat without being occasionally betrayed into florid writing, is the most unadorned of all Burke's works. It appeared when he was twenty-five or twenty-six. When, at forty, he wrote the Thoughts on the Causes of the existing Dis-

Digitized by Google

contents, his reason and his judgment had reached their full maturity; but his eloquence was still in its splendid dawn. At fifty, his rhetoric was quite as rich as good taste would permit; and when he died, at almost seventy, it had become ungracefully gorgeous. In his youth he wrote on the emotions produced by mountains and cascades, by the master-pieces of painting and sculpture, by the faces and necks of beautiful women, in the style of a Parliamentary report. In his old age he discussed treaties and tariffs in the most fervid and brilliant language of romance. It is strange that the Essay on the Sublime and Beautiful, and the Letter to a Noble Lord, should be the productions of one man. But it is far more strange that the Essay should have been a production of his youth, and the Letter of his old age.

We will give very short specimens of Bacon's two styles. In 1597, he wrote thus: "Crafty men contemn studies; simple men admire them; and wise men use them; for they teach not their own use: that is a wisdom without them, and won by observation. Read not to contradict, nor to believe, but to weigh and consider. Some books are to be tasted, others to be swallowed, and some few to be chewed and digested. Reading maketh a full man, conference a ready man, and writing an exact man. And therefore if a man write little, he had need have a great memory; if he confer little, have a present wit; and if he read little, have much cunning to seem to know that he doth not. Histories make men wise, poets witty, the mathematics subtle, natural philosophy deep, morals grave, logic and rhetoric able to contend." It will hardly be disputed that this is a passage to be "chewed and digested." We do not believe that Thucydides himself

Digitized by Google

has anywhere compressed so much thought into so small a space.

In the additions which Bacon afterwards made to the Essays, there is nothing superior in truth or weight to what we have quoted. But his style was constantly becoming richer and softer. The following passage, first published in 1625, will show the extent of the change: "Prosperity is the blessing of the Old Testament; adversity is the blessing of the New, which carrieth the greater benediction and the clearer evidence of God's favour. Yet, even in the Old Testament, if you listen to David's harp you shall hear as many hearse-like airs as carols; and the pencil of the Holy Ghost hath laboured more in describing the afflictions of Job than the felicities of Solomon. Prosperity is not without many fears and distastes; and adversity is not without comforts and hopes. We see in needleworks and embroideries it is more pleasing to have a lively work upon a sad and solemn ground, than to have a dark and melancholy work upon a lightsome ground. Judge therefore of the pleasure of the heart by the pleasure of the eye. Certainly virtue is like precious odours, most fragrant when they are incensed or crushed; for prosperity doth best discover vice, but adversity doth best discover virtue."

It is by the Essays that Bacon is best known to the multitude. The *Novum Organum* and the *De Augmentis* are much talked of, but little read. They have produced indeed a vast effect on the opinions of mankind; but they have produced it through the operation of intermediate agents. They have moved the intellects which have moved the world. It is in the Essays alone that the mind of Bacon is brought into immediate contact with the minds of ordinary readers. There he

Digitized by Google

opens an exoteric school, and talks to plain men, in language which everybody understands, about things in which everybody is interested. He has thus enabled those who must otherwise have taken his merits on trust to judge for themselves; and the great body of readers have, during several generations, acknowledged that the man who has treated with such consummate ability questions with which they are familiar may well be supposed to deserve all the praise bestowed on him by those who have sat in his inner school.

Without any disparagement to the admirable treatise *De Augmentis*, we must say that, in our judgment, Bacon's greatest performance is the first book of the *Novum Organum*. All the peculiarities of his extraordinary mind are found there in the highest perfection. Many of the aphorisms, but particularly those in which he gives examples of the influence of the *idola*, show a nicety of observation that has never been surpassed. Every part of the book blazes with wit, but with wit which is employed only to illustrate and decorate truth. No book ever made so great a revolution in the mode of thinking, overthrew so many prejudices, introduced so many new opinions. Yet no book was ever written in a less contentious spirit. It truly conquers with chalk and not with steel. Proposition after proposition enters into the mind, is received not as an invader, but as a welcome friend, and though previously unknown, becomes at once domesticated. But what we most admire is the vast capacity of that intellect which, without effort, takes in at once all the domains of science, all the past, the present, and the future, all the errors of two thousand years, all the encouraging signs of the passing times, all the bright hopes of the coming age. Cowley, who was among the most ardent, and not

Digitized by Google

among the least discerning followers of the new philosophy, has, in one of his finest poems, compared Bacon to Moses standing on Mount Pisgah. It is to Bacon, we think, as he appears in the first book of the *Novum Organum*, that the comparison applies with peculiar felicity. There we see the great Lawgiver looking round from his lonely elevation on an infinite expanse; behind him a wilderness of dreary sands and bitter waters, in which successive generations have sojourned, always moving, yet never advancing, reaping no harvest, and building no abiding city; before him a goodly land, a land of promise, a land flowing with milk and honey. While the multitude below saw only the flat sterile desert in which they had so long wandered, bounded on every side by a near horizon, or diversified only by some deceitful mirage, he was gazing from a far higher stand on a far lovelier country, following with his eye the long course of fertilising rivers, through ample pastures, and under the bridges of great capitals, measuring the distances of marts and havens, and portioning out all those wealthy regions from Dan to Beersheba.

It is painful to turn back from contemplating Bacon's philosophy to contemplate his life. Yet without so turning back it is impossible fairly to estimate his powers. He left the University at an earlier age than that at which most people repair thither. While yet a boy he was plunged into the midst of diplomatic business. Thence he passed to the study of a vast technical system of law, and worked his way up through a succession of laborious offices, to the highest post in his profession. In the mean time he took an active part in every Parliament; he was an adviser of the Crown: he paid court with the greatest assiduity and address to

Digitized by Google

all whose favour was likely to be of use to him; he lived much in society; he noted the slightest peculiarities of character, and the slightest changes of fashion. Scarcely any man has led a more stirring life than that which Bacon led from sixteen to sixty. Scarcely any man has been better entitled to be called a thorough man of the world. The founding of a new philosophy, the imparting of a new direction to the minds of speculators, this was the amusement of his leisure, the work of hours occasionally stolen from the Woolsack and the Council Board. This consideration, while it increases the admiration with which we regard his intellect, increases also our regret that such an intellect should so often have been unworthily employed. He well knew the better course, and had, at one time, resolved to pursue it. "I confess," said he in a letter written when he was still young, "that I have as vast contemplative ends as I have moderate civil ends." Had his civil ends continued to be moderate, he would have been, not only the Moses, but the Joshua of philosophy. He would have fulfilled a large part of his own magnificent predictions. He would have led his followers, not only to the verge, but into the heart of the promised land. He would not merely have pointed out, but would have divided the spoil. Above all, he would have left, not only a great, but a spotless name. Mankind would then have been able to esteem their illustrious benefactor. We should not then be compelled to regard his character with mingled contempt and admiration, with mingled aversion and gratitude. We should not then regret that there should be so many proofs of the narrowness and selfishness of a heart, the benevolence of which was yet large enough to take in all races and all ages. We

Digitized by Google

should not then have to blush for the disingenuousness of the most devoted worshipper of speculative truth, for the servility of the boldest champion of intellectual freedom. We should not then have seen the same man at one time far in the van, at another time far in the rear of his generation. We should not then be forced to own that he who first treated legislation as a science was among the last Englishmen who used the rack, that he who first summoned philosophers to the great work of interpreting nature, was among the last Englishmen who sold justice. And we should conclude our survey of a life placidly, honourably, beneficently passed, "in industrious observations, grounded conclusions, and profitable inventions and discoveries," [1] with feelings very different from those with which we now turn away from the checkered spectacle of so much glory and so much shame.

[1] From a Letter of Bacon to Lord Burleigh.

END OF VOL. III.

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google

Digitized by Google